SWALES

With Contour Ditches We Can Conserve Even Increase the Amount of Topsoil

Figure 2

MARKING CONTOUR LINES

With the "A" Frame that you have built mark off contour lines on your field. Use stakes to mark these contour lines, just as you see here. The contour ditches will be dug following the contour lines marked off by stakes. As the ditches are dug, the stakes can be removed. The spacing between contours depends on the steepness of the ground, the drainage qualities of the soil and the amount of rainfall in the area.

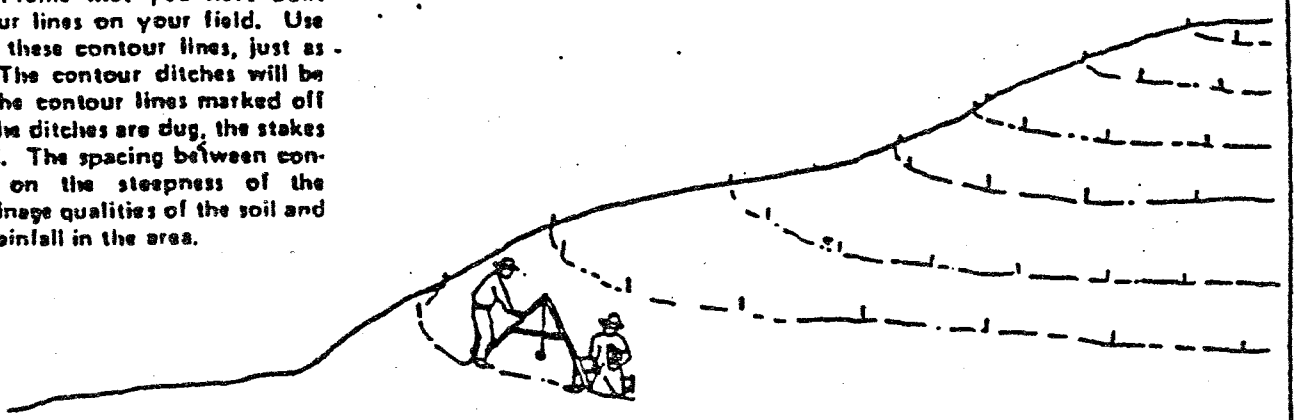


Figure 3

DIGGING CONTOUR DITCHES

Here you see contour ditches that have been g following the contour lines marked off stakes. The ditches are about 12 inches 30 cm.) wide and 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30 cm.) deep. The steeper the land, the closer together the ditches should be. On steep land the ditches may be just a few feet apart. On nearly flat land they may be 65 feet (20 meters) apart. On the higher, steeper part of the hill in this diagram the contour ditches are closer together. On the lower, flatter part the ditches are further apart.

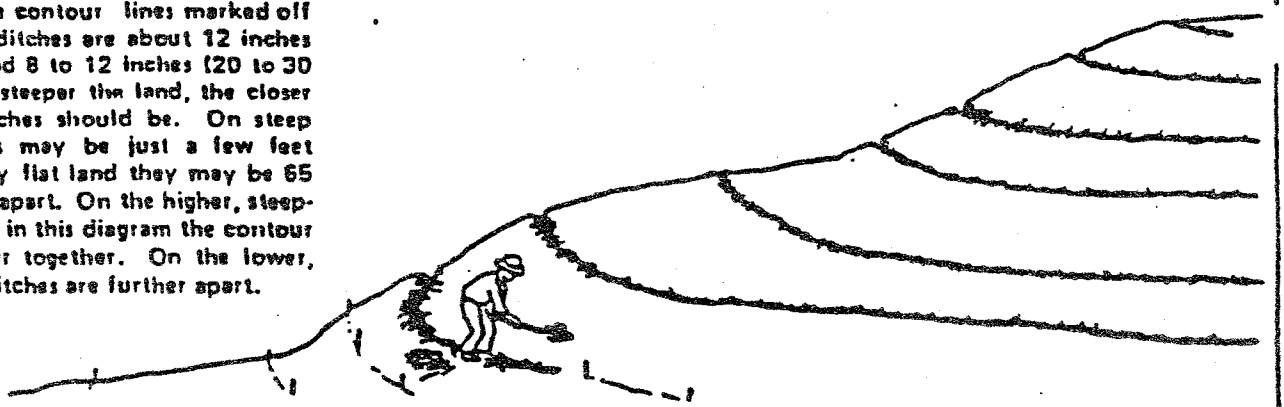
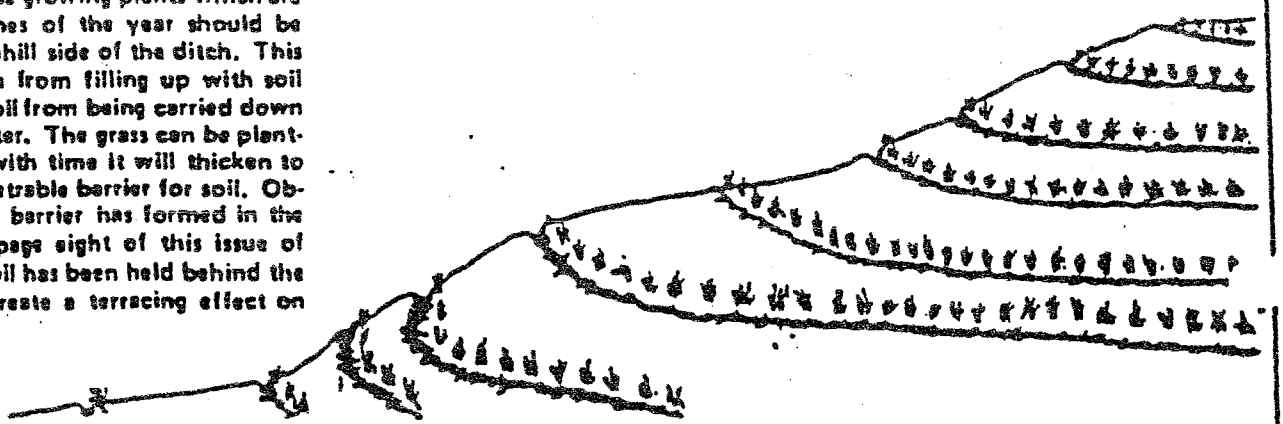
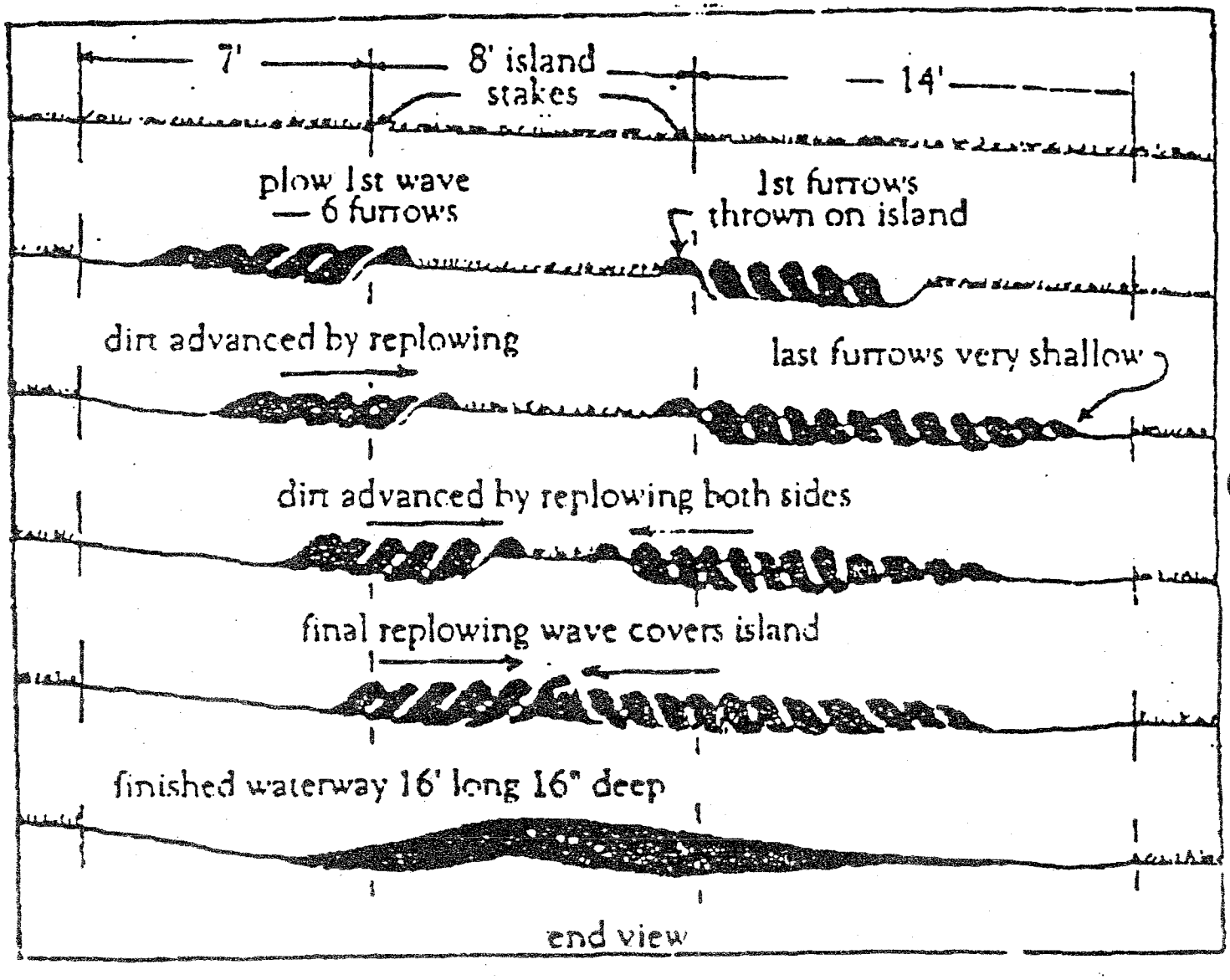


Figure 4

PLANTING GRASS BARRIERS ABOVE THE DITCHES

Grass or other close-growing plants which are present at all times of the year should be planted on the uphill side of the ditch. This protects the ditch from filling up with soil and prevents the soil from being carried down the hill by rainwater. The grass can be planted sparsely, and with time it will thicken to become an impenetrable barrier for soil. Observe how such a barrier has formed in the lower photo on page eight of this issue of In Action. The soil has been held behind the grass barrier to create a terracing effect on the hillside.





Making a Terraced Waterway With A Moldboard Fi

The secret to terracing is to begin plowing with a shallow penetration of around 4 inches. Then with each replowing, set the plow lower so the points find solid purchase in undisturbed ground.