

Local Humus or Peat Deposits and How to Use them Safely

OCCASIONALLY the Green Committee will discover that there is a deposit of peat or humus on the club property, and many of them are inclined to immediately jump to the conclusion that here is a fine opportunity to save money in the top-dressing of the putting greens.

We cannot impress too strongly on those who are in this situation that great caution must be used before these small local deposits are used on grass. More than one green has shown the ill-effects of material of this sort which has been dug up without accurate knowledge of what was being done, and it behooves those who have these peat beds to "look before they leap." Only the other day a case came to our attention where it was proposed to use a local deposit for a very fine new course. The material was exceedingly sour and totally unfit for use. The gentleman in charge, however, knew better than to dig up the material and use it right away. He had heard in more or less detail about the methods used by those who mine humus for commercial purposes, and therefore he planned to subject his material to several extraordinary processes, including that of kiln-drying it like brick, with a very high degree of heat, which, of course, if the heat did not entirely consume the peat, would probably have left him with a very fine grade of charcoal. Luckily, he was stopped in time by a green-keeper who realized the mistake, and was given proper directions for taking care of the bed with a view to using it in a year or so. The result was that for a time the club will use the commercial material now, and their own later.

Few deposits of peat (which is the forerunner of humus as known commercially) are, in the natural state, fit for use. They are very apt to be sour and fibrous, brown in color, and in many cases greatly resembling water-

soaked stable manure. The reason for this brown color is the fact that the peat is not yet entirely decayed, and, in this state, it is far worse than useless. If proper means are employed, most deposits may be brought to the inky-black, crumbly state which is characteristic of true humus. It will do no good to think that just because the top inch or so is in this state that some of the brown peat may be dug up, mixed with the black *humus*, and ground up and used. The results would be very poor if this were done. The object is to take such means as will give about six to eight inches of black humus.

This is not a very economical thing to do if the bed does not contain from half an acre to an acre, but if the bed is of this size a good grade of humus might be obtained profitably. First, the underbrush, weeds, trees, etc., must be removed from the entire area. Next the bed should be harrowed with a disc harrow. This should be done very frequently, so that all parts of the top layer will be exposed to the action of the sun and air. If the material is quite brown, no means should be employed that would tend to drain the bed, as swampy conditions are most favorable to decay of the fibrous portions. If this harrowing is kept up frequently, it will soon be noticed that the material is becoming much blacker, which is an indication that humus is being formed.

Sometimes the bed will not support the growth of small garden vegetables, and if this is the case, by no means expect it to grow grass. However, when the top has become quite black, and the material down about six inches is markedly darker than it originally was, we would recommend planting such small vegetables as onions, carrots, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, and celery. There will usually be no expense connected with growing these, as some one will usually do the necessary cultivating, etc., for the privilege of taking away the truck. All this will improve the quality of the material.

The above hints should be carried out for *at least* two summer seasons—three would be better—and then the Green Committee may safely think of using the material. However, before finally using the material on a green, several tests should be made in actual growth, and it would be advisable to set apart a section of land for the purpose. Tests should be made, using one area without treatment as a control, both with grass already growing and with a newly seeded area. Obviously, if the tests are satisfactory, no fear need be had as to the results on the greens. To get a line on the quality of the humus, a test might be made along with one of the commercial varieties. If the local material does not give as good results, it is either naturally inferior or it needs more cultivation. In *no* case should local material be used without a careful and comprehensive test of actual growth being made.

Divot Marks

ONE of the first things one learns about golf is the sentence, "Please replace divots."

Many golfers replace divots, or see that their caddies do so, in a very conscientious manner; a greater number do it in a perfunctory manner, and a good number don't do it at all. When a divot is taken it is quite a matter of chance whether the scar heals quickly or remains open for a year or more.

It stands to reason that all divot marks heal quicker on rich soils than they do on poor sandy soils; also a divot taken when the soil is moist or during damp weather stands a fair chance of recovering quickly, whereas if it is taken during hot dry weather it stands a very poor chance of recovering anyway until the next growing season unless given some assistance.

The best way to heal divot marks is to fill them up with prepared soil and seed in the following manner:

Take a barrowful of dry sifted soil and mix with it three or four pounds

of grass seeds specially prepared to suit the soil of the links. Apply the prepared seed and soil by dropping a handful of it into every divot mark or rabbit scrape seen, and press it down with the foot. It is incredible how quickly and thoroughly all such scars "through the green" can be healed if the work is done systematically. The best way to do the work is to send out two men with one barrowful of the soil; the barrow should be wheeled up the centre of the course, and the men should work away from it, one on either side, carrying a quantity of the soil in a bucket or other suitable vessel.

In the hot weather during the summer it would be well to use a somewhat stronger method when repairing divots, owing to the fact that the season is more or less unfavorable for the growing of grass. Instead of using the soil alone for making the seed mixture, use humus. This will germinate the seed more rapidly and exert a forcing action on it, with the result that the young plant will be better able to stand the great heat. The use of a little water when applying the mixture will also help to give good results.



JUST A REMINDER

THE PIPE (to irascible old stickler for the Rules playing his ball out of water): "Don't forget to replace the divot, sir, will you?"