

Qualifications of an Advanced Greenkeeper

BY LEONARD MACOMBER

GREENKEEPING is no longer a peaceful occupation. It is a constant warfare throughout the entire season. The greenkeeper is always fighting against pests, grass diseases, weeds, bad drainage, etc.

Modern greenkeeping is not carried out by rule of thumb, but is based on scientific principles and common-sense methods. When applied to greenkeeping, science should be defined as organized common sense, and this is absolutely essential for success. For a greenkeeper to possess a comprehensive knowledge of agrostology, geology, botany, etc., is not necessary. It is apt to prove very confusing, and most always results in rule-of-thumb methods. An elementary scientific knowledge is sometimes useful, but an experienced chemist or botanist having constant practice is far more reliable, supplementing common-sense methods as applied to nature.

There are many people who have an erroneous idea about soil analysis. They think that a chemical analysis of soil will show just how to treat it to increase the crop production. To the average person a chemical analysis of soil means nothing, and usually it is a waste of time and expense, because two soils may have exactly the same analysis chemically and still give different returns in crop yields. The chemist can determine the total amount of the plant food elements in the soil, but he cannot tell how much of this is available for plant use. There are many conditions, other than plant food content, that must be taken into consideration in increasing crop production. An experienced soil chemist, by knowing these conditions, can often give much helpful advice without making an actual analysis. An examination of a sample of the soil and a personal visit to the grounds is far more advisable. There is a place for the chemical analysis of soils, but it requires a knowledge

of chemistry to interpret it, and it is not worth while for a greenkeeper to acquire it.

The same can be said of agrostology except that an elementary knowledge is quite often worse than no knowledge at all. For example, we quite frequently find greenkeepers or chairmen of committees prescribing mixtures of grass seeds when their experience has only covered a period of a few months or years. Some have made various growing tests of seeds and mixtures, hardly ever trying the same mixture twice under different weather conditions, and then form conclusions that are far from correct. Others have heard so-called experts say what varieties and proportions of same are best suited for certain local conditions and soil, and immediately they work in the wrong direction at the expense of their club when conditions are in all probability different.

If committees and greenkeepers as a whole would only place more confidence in the ability of recognized turf experts and seedsmen, who make the production of golfing turf a specialty, to supply the correct mixtures of seed and fertilizer, they would obtain far better results.

There are very few greenkeepers, golf architects, or committeemen who know the first thing about grass seed, and yet how many are willing to prescribe mixtures and to identify with a naked eye sub-varieties of seeds when it is often absolutely impossible for the greatest seed expert in the world to do so with a microscope?

For a greenkeeper to be a success, he must know how to handle his men, his committee, his soil, his resources, and last, but not least, he must love the soil—his soil; learn to understand it and then the soil will respond to its utmost. If you take two men and give them adjoining plots of ground equal in every way, the same seeds, fertilizers, tools, etc., the man who loves the soil will get better results than the man who simply regards it as a producing agency to satisfy his needs.