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Education and Self-Education for Greensmen

By JAMES G. MOORE

WHAT the average greenkeeper needs
is knowledge and still more knowledge.
It has been only a comparatively short time since golf in the United
States reached the magnitude where more than a few have been giving much attention
to the many problems incident to producing and maintaining good greens and
fairways. Some turf problems are unsolved and possibly some are unsolvable,
but the research work on turf problems carried on in this country for the past
ten years and the research work on related problems extending back many
years have resulted in an accumulation of information which, if applied, will correct
numerous unfavorable conditions now found on many golf courses. This information
is available to the greenkeeper who is awake to his needs and to the desirability
of improving his methods. Therefore, the greenkeeper cannot be excused if he plods
along in the same old rut and fails to avail himself of such information and also
the new information relating to his problems which is probably accumulating more
rapidly now than ever before.

The subject assigned me really is to answer the question of how the greenkeeper
can come into possession of this information. First let me state that I believe that
a good practical course in a college of agriculture would be an invaluable asset to
anyone who is to follow greenkeeping. Do not misunderstand me; I do not mean to
imply that such a course is necessary to successful greenkeeping but it would give
one a background which would make it possible for him to recognize many green-
keeping problems more quickly and make it easier for him to solve them under his own
particular conditions. From the very beginning, it would supplement his practical
experience and enable him to plan his operations so as to obviate difficulties which
might arise due to faulty practice. College training cannot replace practical experience
but it will radically modify many of the impractical rules based solely upon
experience and often faulty as regards the fundamental principle involved.

So far as I know there is no long course in greenkeeping offered by any college but
the liberality in elective courses in many of our colleges would enable one to largely
pursue subjects fundamental to greenkeeping.

Club Should Back Short Courses

Recognizing the needs of greenkeepers for help on their problems, several col-
leges of agriculture have instituted short courses for greenkeepers. The plans of the
various courses differ materially but all of them have the same basic idea; to
bring before the greenkeeper some of the fundamentals upon which the production and maintenance of desirable turf depend. To me there has been one discouraging feature—the seeming lack of interest in this enterprise on the part of the officials of a majority of golf clubs. I am willing to concede that probably the greenkeeper is most largely concerned but the golf club is also concerned. I think it should cooperate with the greenkeeper to the extent of helping him meet at least a part of the expense in his attendance upon such a course. A short course is not a holiday, it's real work. It's a mighty poor course or an unusually dumb greenkeeper that would not pay a profit to the club in a single year even though it paid all the legitimate expense its greenkeeper incurred in attending such a course.

As the first method in self education of the average greenkeeper I would advise attending a short course. Can reading bulletins, and periodicals or studying books substitute for it? In my opinion they cannot. First of all there is the stimulation which comes from association with others having like interests. Then there are the questions which arise in the consideration of every subject, possibly little points not made fully clear. Who answers them when you read an article or a book? At the course there's the man who has specially considered the subject and has the explanation or the brother greenkeeper whose experience enables him to give just the needed bit of information. Don't get the idea that the instructional staff are the only ones who contribute knowledge at these courses. Not an inconsiderable amount of it is furnished by the greenkeepers. But whatever the source of knowledge the discussion following the presentation of the subject matter is a feature which can only be had when there is a group.

Being a pedagogue you would expect that my next suggestion would be text books. Now unless I'm mistaken you are going to find advice in them which you are confident you know perfectly well “won't hold water.” The chances are that you may be right. But are you sure you are right? Quite likely that advice is based upon certain underlying principles with which you are not familiar. Well, what are they and has the author made the right deductions concerning them? Immediately you want other authority and doubtless what you need is not to be found in books on golf at all but in a treatise on soils, drainage, plant nutrition, or fertilization. At once your book horizon widens. If you pursue the quest, the number of books and the variety of subjects treated will continually broaden and in their study your knowledge of subjects treated will continually broaden and in their study your knowledge of the principles underlying greenkeeping will also broaden.