

Mass. Winter School Course Builds Up Greenkeeper

By GEOFFREY CORNISH

In the mid-twenties, golf courses were being built in unprecedented numbers, and enormous sums were being spent on their construction and maintenance. Much was known at universities and research centers concerning subjects pertinent to turf such as soil chemistry, plant physiology, soil-plant interrelationships, fertilizer practices, and a host of other matters. But all this valuable knowledge was available at that time to greenkeepers through only a limited number of good magazines and bulletins and a small amount of extension work on the part of commercial organizations and the U.S.G.A. Green Section. Often the greenkeeper was too skeptical to make use of the knowledge provided him. Although there was some direct extension work from universities concerning turf, no university curriculum provided for studies in this field.

The dictionary defines Agrostology as "that branch of systematic botany treating of the grasses." At the University of Massachusetts, this word has been applied to the part of Agronomy which deals with the culture of lawn grasses and a separate section has been established known as the Section of Agrostology.

There, studies in Agrostology are devoted to all phases of lawn culture including athletic fields, recreational sites,

airports, cemeteries, the home lawn, etc. But emphasis is placed on golf course work since the larger number of students attending the various courses come from golf courses or intend to proceed into work associated with them. Professor Lawrence S. Dickinson, the pioneer educator of fine turf growers and for a quarter of a century a vigorous and valuable campaigner for better turf is head of Agrostology at the university. Professor Dickinson recognized that if the scientific knowledge, which was accumulating regarding turf, was to be of maximum value to the public and if the greenkeeping field was to be made an attractive one to young men it was necessary to provide the greenkeeper with a sound scientific background. The Professor decided that the way to accomplish this was to establish a school for greenkeepers.

First Winter School Opened

In 1927, he opened the Winter School for Greenkeepers at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. This was the first school of its kind. The course offered was designed to instruct the practical man in fine turf culture specifically and in applied agricultural sciences generally in order to broaden his vision and scope so that he might take full advantage of scientific progress and apply it to his own



Prof. Dickinson and Carleton E. Treat, Montclair GC, (N. J.), instructor at the Winter School, rehearse a class problem.



A Winter School class solves a problem on a sand model which makes it possible for students to visualize projects under study.

field. It is interesting to note that around the time Professor Dickinson opened the first winter school, he was asked on numerous occasions both by golfers and educators how it was possible to spend two weeks on the study of lawn grasses.

This first class opened in January 1927, and was attended by nine greenkeepers. Number one man, alphabetically in this group, was Arthur Anderson, now greenkeeping superintendent at the Brae Burn Country Club in West Newton, Massachusetts. Courses were given in soils, botany, entomology, equipment, water-systems and fine turf culture. The first classes were held in a tiny tool shack on the campus.



Prof. Dickinson and Dr. Dale H. Sieling are presented with an Ideal power greensmower by Gardiner S. Platt, Asst. to the pres., Indian Motorcycle Co., as a contribution by the Ideal Div. of Indian to further the turf maintenance education work of the Univ.

From this small beginning the Section of Agrostology has grown year by year. The Ten Weeks Winter School for Greenkeepers has been held annually except for a break for the duration of the war. In the fall of 1946, a two year course for fine turf managers was instituted as a part of the Stockbridge School of Agriculture and the first class was graduated in June, 1948.

For several years before the war, advanced short courses of five weeks duration were held for graduates of the Ten Weeks Winter School. These courses were popular but due to lack of classroom space, it has not yet been possible to restart them.

Professor Dickinson now has as his assistant the writer, who is himself a graduate of both the ten week Winter School and the advanced course, a graduate in Agronomy from the University of British Columbia, and for a number of years, a superintendent for Stanley Thompson, famous golf architect. Carl Treat of the Montclair

Golf and Country Club has been closely connected with the Winter School since its start. In years when it is possible for him to leave Montclair, he acts as an instructor at the Winter School.

Courses of Study Offered

At the present time, the following courses of study are offered in the Section of Agrostology:

- (a) The Ten Weeks Winter School for Greenkeepers held annually in January through March 15th.
- (b) The two year course for fine turf managers.
- (c) Supplementary courses in the growing of fine turf offered to four year students proceeding to degrees in Landscape Architecture or Agronomy. These supplementary courses are offered to provide working knowledge of the construction and maintenance of fine turf areas to men who are proceeding into professions such as landscape design, civic planning and recreational work.

The Ten Weeks Winter School is attended largely by greenkeepers and managers. Others interested in the growing of fine turf such as park or cemetery superintendents and landscape men are eligible and do attend. The course is limited to twenty-five and preference is given to qualified Massachusetts men, but some vacancies are retained for out of state people. In 1948, there were 68 applicants for 25 vacancies and very careful screening was required. Courses in the different aspects of turf culture are given by Professors Dickinson and Cornish of the Section of Agrostology. Courses in allied subjects including Soils, Botany, Entomology, Water Systems, and Drainage are taught by other departments on the campus. Management problems, cost accounting and analysis of costs of various methods of caring for the grass are studied carefully.

Conference Concludes Course

Men noted in the field are invited to speak in forum hours. Evening discussions and question periods are held. Throughout their ten weeks stay on the campus, the students are encouraged to take part in all phases of University life. Libraries, laboratories, gymnasium, etc. are all at their disposal. Ages of the men attending this course have varied from twenty to forty-five years.

The ten weeks is always concluded by a fine turf conference which is attended

(Continued on page 56)

And let me tell the chairman of any small town course that if there is a greenkeepers' association in his territory by all means attend all of that organization's meetings and listen to and ask questions of these very able men. The Iowa Greenkeepers' association members and meetings have helped me in work for our club more than could be appraised in just dollars and cents. These men not only know what turf and maintenance problems the chairman has but the policy and personnel problems. They'll give you as many of the right answers as the green chairman ever can get from practical experts. But a lot of the other right answers you'll learn only from headaches, as I did.

BUILDS GREENKEEPER

(Continued from page 40)

not only by the graduating class, but by greenkeepers from all parts of New England and neighboring states. This conference also serves as a "homecoming" period for the graduates of the winter school and they gather from far and wide. Speakers at the conference include men noted in the fine turf field. Members of the graduating class are also selected to give their views on the profession.

Upon completion of the course, the graduate has received ten weeks of intensive study. He is eminently equipped to handle the numerous problems of his chosen field. During his studies he has been encouraged to compile a set of complete notebooks from lecture notes and from precis that are handed out in class. These notebooks serve him in future years as a text giving him the latest and best information. It is considered that a graduate's set of notebooks represents at the time of his graduation the most complete

and up-to-date text available on the growing of grass.

Graduates of the eighteen Winter Schools which have been held to date, occupy a great variety of positions. Several own their own courses, some are managers, others are pro-greenkeepers and others are with equipment and supply dealers. Five lost their lives during World War II. By far the greater number of the graduates are greenkeeping superintendents. Arthur Anderson, Ed Casey, Jack Counsell, Tom Festo, Emile Mashie, John McNamara, Charles Storrier and Norman Butler are a few of the graduates on whose courses National Championships have been played.

A number of graduates own their own businesses. For example, Clinton Kent Bradley, writer for *Golfdom*, runs his own equipment business in New Jersey and Henry and Bill Mitchell, two of the four famous Mitchell brothers, all graduates of the school, own and operate a velvet bent nursery in New Hampshire and are also in the golf course construction business.

Ted Glowa is Superintendent of Grounds at the United States Military Academy. Casper McCulloch is greenkeeping superintendent at Banff Springs in the Canadian Rockies and keeps a watchful eye on other Canadian Pacific courses. G. H. Cassell is in charge of all fine turf areas controlled by the United States in the Canal Zone including the Fort Amador Golf Course at Balboa Heights.

Demand Exceeds Supply

It is not within the scope of this article to catalogue the positions held by all the graduates, but all are doing well and all are making valuable contributions year by year to the fine turf work. The alumni of the eighteen Winter Schools now constitute a large group within the greenkeeping profession.

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The two year course is limited to twelve students entering annually. The first year of the course starts at the beginning of October and proceeds to the end of March. A supervised placement training period of six months follows in the student's chosen field, whether it be golf course, park, cemetery or business. At the end of this period, the student returns to the university for a further year of academic work and is graduated in June of his second year. Courses studied provide a thorough grounding in fine turf culture, allied sciences and related fields such as horticulture, floriculture and arboriculture. Courses in business English, speech, accounting and agricultural engineering are also taken by the two year students.

On completion of the two years, the graduate has not only received a broad general education, but has a start towards a life profession for which he is eminently suited by virtue of his education. If two year men elect to proceed to degrees after graduation, they are offered some credit for the two years if their high school academic qualifications are sufficient for university entrance.

The first class to graduate in the two year course finished in 1948. These graduates have already settled in a number of positions with the demand for them exceeding the supply. Paul Murphy of this class has remained on the campus in charge of turf experimental work. Paul O'Leary took up the position of greenkeeping superintendent at the Craig Wood G&CC at Lake Placid. Judson Edwards has received the position of greenkeeper at the Litchfield Country Club in Connecticut and Jack Sullivan took over the position of pro-greenkeeper at the Suffield Country Club in that state. The other boys are in positions either on golf courses or in work associated with them. It is confidently expected that this group of capable young men, now starting in their life's profession will contribute much of value to golf in future years.

Research Complements Teaching

Almost from the inauguration of classes in fine turf management, Professor Dickinson realized the necessity for demonstration turf areas on the campus. Research projects in turf were established and until the war these were an integral part of the Section of Agrostology. At the outbreak of war, research in turf had to be abandoned. This year, however, with the financial and moral assistance of the Massachusetts Section of the New England Turf As-

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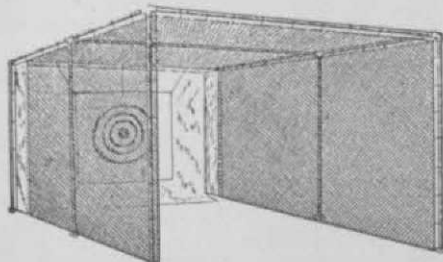
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sociation under the leadership of Homer C. Darling of Juniper Hill Country Club, Northboro, Massachusetts, research and demonstration areas have been re-opened. Under the direction of the writer and Paul Murphy, a large practice putting green which will be open to play has been built and greenhouse plots and experimental areas within the university's formal gardens are being laid out.

These areas will be used for both classroom demonstrations and for research work.

The research is being arranged so as not to duplicate the work already done by other institutions. Members of the Massachusetts Turf Association are advising on the problems to be studied, and a large part of the research is arranged to prove experimentally conclusions which have already been reached as a result of observations by fine turf growers, Professor Dickinson and the University staff. The experiments are open to visitors and bulletins concerning the findings will be forwarded by the Section of Agrostology to members of the Turf Association.

A commercial firm has recently given an industrial fellowship to the Section of Agrostology for study of a by-product of their industry with the intention of adapting it to golf course and fine turf work. Mr. M. A. Harward, a graduate of Brigham Young University has joined the Section to complete this research.

Emphasis on Teaching Greenkeepers

With the assistance of the Massachusetts Turf Association and the recently donated industrial fellowship, the amount of research into fine turf research at Massachusetts is growing steadily and as much extension work from the university to the field is done as time permits. To facilitate this extension, Professor Dickinson has recently completed a comprehensive illustrated booklet on lawn areas which is being published and will be circulated shortly on request.

As a result of the work of this school and other institutions which are offering short courses in greenkeeping, much progress has been made in greenkeeping education since Professor Dickinson established the first class on the University of Massachusetts campus back in 1927. But large numbers of replacements are needed annually and as new golf courses, memorial parks, playing fields and airports are completed, the demand for trained turf specialists continues to be large and exceeds the supply.