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Noer photos

Here is a familiar Northern scene this spring. Bent on green is damaged and there is poa annua on the apron. Strip is bluegrass, sodded in fall of 1958. Green had calcium arsenate treatment last fall.

Winterkill Plays Havoc With Greens in Northern Part of Country

But Milwaukee Agronomist Recommends Waiting for Favorable Weather to Restore Them

By O. J. NOER

BENT GRASS greens fared badly during the past winter in the northern part of the Midwest and in other sections north of a line from New York through Chicago.

Snowmold damage was negligible on fungicide treated greens.

In Minnesota the fall of 1958 was extremely dry and there was no snow until late spring. Shrinkage cracks, an inch or more in width, developed in the greens. By spring greens were an overall brown color due to desiccation caused by drying winds. Water was hauled in tanks to restore soil moisture and to start soil swelling to close the cracks. Heavy watering for the same purpose started as soon as it was safe to use the water sytsem.

Recovery May Be Slow

When moisture and temperatures become favorable for growth, recovery should occur. But the process may be a slow one. There is no reason to become excited. Patience is the better approach.

Recovery of the established grass is apt to be as quick and more satisfactory than renovation and re-seeding. Member impatience at seeming neglect to speed recovery by re-seeding can be forestalled by an appropriate explanation posted on the bulletin board in the clubhouse or pro shop.

In other parts of the Midwest, greens looked good in late February and early March. Damage occurred after that. It followed snow and sleet in late March, and above normal temperatures accompanied by heavy warm rains during the first week in April that created widespread flooding. The weather turned cold abruptly and temperatures continued below normal through mid-April. As a result, conditions have been unfavorable for plant and grass growth.

Where Damage Is Concentrated

Damage to grass has been most pronounced on poorly drained greens, and is worst in low-lying pocketed areas that hold ponded water and along trough-like drainage ways. Both have stayed overly wet long after other parts of the green have become dry. Overwetness seems to have been the aggravating cause of damage.

At one course in Milwaukee damage was definitely less on the first greens from which snow and ice were removed.

There was slight damage to this green in ponded spots. The snow and ice was removed in April, saving this club some grief.

Here's a source of headaches. Milwaukee River flooded following heavy snow in March and heavy rain the first week in April.

One supt. in Iowa watered greens immediately after the snow stopped falling to melt snow and ice quickly. Damage was negligible. The greens have reasonably good surface drainage.

A piece of turf was removed from one of the worst looking spots on a green at one of the Milwaukee County courses. It was placed in a greenhouse. Bottom heat brought the soil to a favorable growth temperature. Recovery has been surprisingly good. This would indicate that renovation and re-seeding may not be necessary in most instances. It would be well to wait until weather becomes favorable for growth before doing anything drastic.

Treat as Newly Planted

If and when new growth starts, greens should be treated like a newly seeded or stolon planted green. Surfaces should be kept moist, but not wet, by light syringing several times daily during rainless weather until new growth becomes well rooted. Fertilizer should be applied at moderate rates when weather becomes favorable for growth.

In Milwaukee the two worst greens on one course were treated liberally with calcium arsenate in the fall of 1958. There was damage on other greens, but to a lesser extent, so it would be unfair to condemn the calcium arsenate. At another course calcium arsenate was used on one part of the green, and lead arsenate on another part with an untreated strip between the two. Damage was slightly more on the calcium arsenate plot than on the rest of the green. There was no discernible difference between the lead arsenate treated area and the check plot alongside it.

Many of the poa annua infested greens look especially bad. Recovery may seem hopeless. Coverage with grass will take place rapidly when weather conditions become favorable for germination of the poa annua seed in the soil. Patience and confidence will be rewarded to those who are willing to live with poa annua.

Re-seeding of the poa annua greens with bent seed may be justified, even though poa annua seedling may overpower most of the bent. A few bent grass seedlings may become established and eventually persist in quantity with a program of light rate seeding each year. Heavy spiking with a spike disc, or use of the Aerothatch or Ren-o-thin before seeding should help establishment of the bent seed.

Penncross seed is scarce, so Seaside is the only creeping bent type seed available until new crop seed of Penncross becomes available in the fall.

Grass on the collars of many greens has fared badly. Damaged poa annua is understandable. It will come back from seed when weather improves.

Some of the bent turf has taken a beating even on well drained collars. As a rule, the damaged bent turf has been heavily thatched and shallow rooted. Recovery may be slow, but will occur from surviving nodes.

Very little bent damage occurred on collars which are aerified each spring and surplus grass removed at the time grass starts permanent growth.

Copies of "Hurry Up, You're Spoiling the Game," which was published in April GOLFING can be obtained at five cents per copy in orders of 100 or more. Send your order to GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn st., Chicago 5.