

Location Is Factor in Choice of Grass Selection

By O. J. Noer

Bermuda greens have been overseeded with domestic rye for many years. Ability to survive cold weather has been one of rye's virtues, especially in the region from Central Florida on north. The odd blanket of snow in the belt west from Virginia and North Carolina has never hurt the rye. It has stayed green and resumed growth after the snow has melted.

In recent years it has been a problem to get a stand of rye in South Florida when winter play was started right after the Christmas holidays and after seeding was carried out at Thanksgiving time. By then the fall rainy season was over, weather became less humid and temperatures more moderate. Now winter play is started early in Nov. That means earlier seeding — when the weather is apt to be hot, wet and humid. Under such conditions, damp-off, caused by pythium, may take a terrific toll.

Adjusted to Climate

Seeding procedures have been adjusted to local climate and weather. Although rye, once established, will take a lot of cold weather, seed will not germinate when it's cold. So in the northern parts of the South it becomes necessary to produce good grass cover while weather is favorable for seed germination. Greens are seeded once at 50 to 100 lbs. rye seed per 1,000 sq. ft. In the deep South germination is no problem so clubs are prone to rely on split seeding because of the damp-off disease danger. They may seed two or three times, at 7 to 14 day intervals, and use 25 to 40 lbs of seed per 1,000 sq. ft., each time.

Tender initial growth is typical of all plant seedlings. Rye is especially bad. Tenderness is accentuated by abundant water and a plentiful supply of nitrogen. That is the secret of crisp, tender lettuce and celery. Phosphate and potash, especially, tend to foster a sturdier type of growth. Practices which promote sturdiness will minimize damp-off and help make pre-seeding fungicide treatments more effective.

Fertilizing Can Be Delayed

Basically it involves using phosphate and potash only at seeding time. Rye seed is one of the larger grass seeds. It contains enough nitrogen to start seedling

growth. There is time enough to begin the use of nitrogen fertilizer two to three weeks after seeding. The soil during germination should be moist but not wet. This may involve light syringing, usually not more than 10 minutes to a green, several times a day, during hot, windy spells of weather. Some go so far as to exclude or include a minimum of organic matter in the topdressing used after seeding to reduce the hazard of over-wetness.

Rye is still best for greens of common Bermuda. On the new fine textured Bermudas, such as Gene Tift, Everglades, and Tiffine (Tifton 328), other cool season grasses are being tried and will supplant rye. They produce putting surfaces more like bent greens and are preferred by northern golfers who go south for all or part of the winter.

Good Initial Cover

Although there have been excellent winter greens over-seeded with a mixture of Kentucky blue grass, red top and bent grass there may be an even better combination. The problem is to find something that will provide good initial cover and mask poa annua when it is a problem. Cost must be within reason.

Poa trivialis may be one of the answers and preferable to red top. It germinates quickly, covers rapidly and masks poa annua better than any other grass. Its ability to cope with pythium is not known because the disease so far has not been virulent where poa trivialis has been tried. Pennlawn and Illahee fescue germinate very quickly and make excellent putting surfaces. When these are used alone, high seeding rates are necessary and hence rather costly. They do not mask poa annua. Their place would seem to be in mixtures with poa trivialis and bent, possibly along with some Kentucky blue.

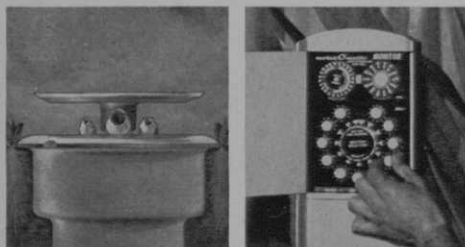
Overseeding Trials

In the overseeding trials established cooperatively by the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission and East Lake CC in Atlanta and at Sea Island for two years, and Ponte Vedra for one season, the best plots have been the ones containing poa trivialis and Seaside bent together or in combination with Kentucky blue and/or fescue. Penn-

(Continued on page 118)



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Location in Grass Selection

(Continued from page 68)

lawn fescue seeded at 50 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft. ranked first at East Lake throughout the first year. Poa annua was not present. There was no transition. Tiffine came in as the fescue disappeared. Pennlawn started the same way at Sea Island but lost first place when poa annua appeared in the plot. Then putting was bad.

Poa trivialis at 4 to 6 lbs, and Seaside at 2 to 3 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft. seeded together or along with some Kentucky blue grass and fescue should be a good basic seed mixture. Where weather is cold in Dec. and Jan. overseeding with rye grass at 25 to 40 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft. after other grasses are well established may be justified. Rye will do well then and competition from the other grasses improves its texture.

Can Be Smothered

Any topdressing used after seeding with bent must be at a light rate, otherwise grass will be smothered. Some prefer to cross spike first, topdress and mat the seed in place with a flexible steel mat.

The use of fungicide to check pythium, and a little nitrogen at seeding time seems justified. Bent seed is especially small in size so the young seedling must have food for growth right after germination.

Uncertified bent seed may contain shepherd's purse and related types of weed seeds. They were present in some seed used in Florida last year. The premium for certified blue tag seed is nominal and is the only kind to use.

Overseeding Observations

(Continued from page 72)

completed by aerating one to three weeks ahead of seeding, and verticutting at the time of seeding to reduce thatch and assure soil contact. Use of a power spiker, as needed, also is recommended just prior to seeding. A phosphorus and potash fertilizer, along with lime, should be applied in accordance with soil test findings prior to seeding. The application of a mercury-containing fungicide at this time also is good practice.

Seed should be cross-broadcast uniformly and dragged into turf with a steel door mat. Two or more passes with the mat may be necessary. Following this, about ¼ or ⅜ ins. of sterilized topdressing should be applied. This, too, should be dragged to obtain a level surface. Then water