A. Urea has a price advantage (per pound of N) but weekly treatments will be far more costly in terms of labor. Ureaform builds residual N in the soil which permits you to supply a year's requirement in four applications. Urea must be applied weekly in small doses to avoid burning. Urea creates no reservoir of residual N to let you "coast" through the hot months.

Everything considered you probably should stay on your residual nitrogen program.

Fairy Ring Infestation

Q. "We have fairy rings in several parts of our course. They are unsightly and occasionally we lose grass. The soil always seems dry and it smells like mushrooms. What are your suggestions?" (Ohio)

A. Since a mushroom fungus (one of several) is responsible for your fairy rings, it is quite natural for the soil to look grey and to smell like mushrooms. The hyphae (fungus mycelia) trap air in the soil so that water runs off as off a duck's back. It seems that the best approach is (1) to puncture, spike, aerify or otherwise make a lot of holes in the soil; (2) apply a long-lasting insoluble nitrogen fertilizer to encourage bacterial activity; (3) water gently and frequently to thoroughly wet all parts of the soil. Soon the dry-looking areas will be green and vigorous. They should stay that way if the program is repeated when needed.

Programs of removing soil to a foot in depth and refilling with new soil are expensive and seldom successful. Some attempts have been made with fungicides but so far no firm recommendations have appeared. Wetting agents could be helpful in initial wetting of the fungus-filled soil.