Real turf is facing a challenge from the installation of synthetic carpets that try to imitate the real thing. In some respects it is an improvement over the poorer examples of real turf; in other respects the qualities of the best real turf can never be equaled by any artificial covering.

Many failures in providing acceptable real turf stem from the fact that the caretaker of the installation was never trained to understand the needs of real grass. Supervisory personnel often failed to provide adequate quantities of the essential materials. Once in the past I recommended the best fertilizer program I knew for the main playing field at a major university. The director of athletics vetoed the program and bought the cheapest fertilizer he could find and severely punished the superintendent of athletics when he could not recover in time for the season’s schedule. This kind of interference has hastened the installation of artificial turf. In this case, the needs of the turf were ignored in the interests of saving a few dollars. The turf that season went to pieces and was the cause of much player dissatisfaction. For the most part, the field was mud instead of clean grass.

Clean uniforms seem to be a plus for artificial turf, especially on color television. True it costs less in clean-up bills, but with all factors under control, real turf need be no dirtier than fake turf. There will be grass stains, of course, but there will be no infected brush burns that come from the imitation turf. Excellent real turf can be grown on sandy soil which does not churn into a giant mud pie when wet because excess water quickly drains through the soil. Our failing has come from our inability to sell the coachees and the administration on providing the money to build the field properly the first time. But, when the fake stuff is installed, the money somehow miraculously appears. Some artificial installations have materialized because agronomists and coaches failed to agree or even talk the same language.

High temperature distress is a big cause of unhappiness with the fake grass. No one has ever complained of this on real turf which has a built-in cooling system, evaportranspiration. Real turf contributes much to the environment; synthetic turf contributes nothing.

In this brief discussion I stressed athletic fields, but golf courses and other turfgrass areas are not immune to the persuasion of the profit-seeking firms that produce, sell and install artificial turf. These firms are eyeing golf course tees and greens. Here, with existing high-quality real turf managed by professional superintendents, the challenge has so far been met. Hopefully invasion of synthetic turf will continue to be a minor consideration.

Q—We are puzzled and bewildered as to what to do concerning all these new grass varieties that are being put on the market. Right now we refer to the bluegrasses, but the bent grasses and the fescues are crowding us too. Is there any place where we can get a bulletin that will give us unbiased statements concerning the performance of each variety so that we can choose more intelligently?

A—We who follow research and variety testing closely across the country also have to work hard to keep from being befuddled. We feel that some varieties that are offered for sale have not been tested adequately. So far as I know the bulletin that you seek does not exist. Were you to ask for information from Purdue, Ohio, (Continued on page 28)
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Pennsylvania and New Jersey, for example, you would get factual un-
biased data. But, a bluegrass that
does well in New Jersey may not
necessarily be the best one for Indiana.

There are regional tests now
operating that eventually will give
you what you seek. All of the better
new varieties are under tests that are
as uniform as possible except for the
effects of climate. Apparently, it
has not been easy to engineer region-
als tests. I do know that the Northeast
Regional Committee is now testing
bluegrasses. The North Central Re-
gional testing was involved with
weed control and a cooperatively-
published bulletin was distributed
at the Nebraska Conference. We can
hope for the same thing with the
grasses. Keep prodding; it will even-
tually get results.

Q—Recent soil tests indicate that,
with scarcely an exception, we are
amply supplied with phosphorus but
potash is uniformly low. We want
to continue our ureaform program
but we cannot seem to locate or
formulate the fertilizer that is best
for our conditions. What do you sug-
gest? Our soils are sandy and very
well drained. (Maryland)

A—I have examined your soil test
results and concur that you need not
apply any additional phosphorus
this season. Your nitrogen and
potassium requirements indicate to
me that your turf would be served best
by applications of a 1:0:1 ratio,
made with 38:0:0 ureaform and
0:0:50 sulfate of potash. This ap-
plies to greens where you spray
powdered ureaform and potash and
to tees and fairways where you
spread granular material.

A 1:0:1 ratio can be made simply
by blending 1,200 pounds of urea-
form (456 pounds N) with 800 pounds
sulfate of potash (400 pounds K₂O).
It is not a precise 1:0:1, but it is close
enough for all practical purposes.
Actually it comes out to a 22.8:0:20
mix fertilizer. A 10 pound applica-
tion per thousand yields 2.28 pounds
N and 2.0 pounds K₂O. This is just
about right for your conditions, and
you will be able to build up your
potassium reserves in the soil. When
you find a company that will make
this special mix for you, let me
know.