

# What is Happening to Musser's Pennncross Bentgrass?

by Dr. Fred V. Grau

Pennncross putting greens with one-half inch roots? I didn't believe it until I saw it with my own eyes! Musser's Pennncross with 10-12" roots in living soil is possible and feasible. At Beltsville I helped to test Pennncross components under stress of drought and heat. Blended into a polycross, this creeping bentgrass has great tolerance to the stress of drought and disease when given a deep fertile soil in which a healthy root system can develop. Overindulgence of a multitude of applications of many materials have succeeded in reducing Musser's rugged sturdy Pennncross to a shadow of its real potential. This situation pertains to a greater extent on some greens more so than others. Professor Musser would turn in his grave were he to know what his grass is asked to endure.

Early in the usage history of Pennncross, this great grass was sullied by substitution, adulteration and mismanagement in production fields. The true worth of the real Pennncross was re-established and saved from degradation by the heroic efforts of Dr. Joe Duich and the growers. The route was through certification under rigid rules and regulations. Today Pennncross and its penn pal, Penneagle, are capable of providing perfection in putting greens worldwide.

I do not know the reasons for the current corry performance of Pennncross (and perhaps Penneagle) on some courses. I know only that it is time for every factor in the game to butt heads in an honest effort to find the answers. We start with the premise that Musser's Pennncross is blameless and go from there.

The MITF and NSTC have vested interests in the studies to be made. Shallow roots cannot be tolerated in putting greens or in sports turf such as athletic fields. Deep healthy root systems are the foundation of healthy wear and divot-resistant turf. This premise holds for all sports turf.

Having lived with grasses which reached 8 to 10 feet into the living soil for their life, it is anathema to me to see turfgrass managers struggling against insurmountable odds in trying to maintain tournament-quality turf on a root system one-half inch deep!

This note casts no stones and points no finger. It states a problem and seeks answers. Perhaps a return to naturalness and simplicity might bring about a more stable system which is more easily managed with the fewer applications of a multiplicity of materials. I cling steadfastly to the age-old belief in life in the soil and to directing all management practices toward encouraging its healthy continuation.

MITF and NSTC stand ready to assist in any way possible to preserve the integrity of great grasses and their innate ability to perform and to provide perfection.

## SUPT. & GOLF PRO TOURNAMENT *(Continued from page 1)*

and dinner at 7:00 p.m. Awards will be presented upon completion. (Hopefully your editor will claim the Clare Emery Trophy.)

A hearty thanks to Chestnut Ridge C.C. and Mark Bertoldi for hosting what promises to be an exciting day of golf. The MAAGCS would also like to thank the following companies for their support of the Superintendent/Professional Golf Tournament: E.Z. Go Golf Carts, G.L. Cornell Co., T.E.S.C.O., Finch Golf and Turf Co., Lea's Green Meadows, Inc., and Hartford Industrial Minerals, Inc.

Only NON-PARTICIPANTS will have to RSVP to our office. Please do so by calling (301) 381-0030.

DIRECTIONS - FROM WASHINGTON: Route 95 North to 695 West, exit at #23 Falls Road. Take Falls Road North 3½ miles and course will be on the left.

Good luck to all, and don't be surprised if a sand bag isn't presented to you!

## ON THE TEE . . .

Maryland State Golf Association (MSGGA) recently made available \$5,000 to fund our four scholarships at the University of Maryland. Students received the "Emmet Gary" award. Congratulations to: Carol A. Coradetti, Thomas P. Mynaugh and to twin brothers Bruce and Brian Zickafoose. The twins are agronomy sophomores and operate their own lawn care company. The scholarships are given to promote interest in the betterment of turf on golf courses, or people devoted to research and teaching! Hopefully, these considerations will be better weighed in the future.

TURFCOMMS is published and edited by Dr. Douglas T. Hawes, Certified Professional Agronomist, specializing in Golf Course Maintenance consultations. TURFCOMMS covers the majority of current interest topics and is a must for any conscientious person in golf course management. Dr. Hawes' travels permit him the opportunity to see and hear a wide variety of problems with differing approaches on how to resolve or cope with the situations. Subscription cost is \$10.00. Send check or money order to: Dr. Douglas T. Hawes, 2408 Roundrock Trail, Plano, Texas 75075, (214) 867-0176.

## Radicalism Revisited

As anyone committed to outside organizations along with work and family will tell you, finding the time necessary for them is often difficult. But, the rewards are great. Involvement best teaches that one person, one voice, make a difference. Involvement builds networks of support with benefits reaching far beyond the limited scope of the immediate organization.

For me this concept represents an ironic turn of events. As a child of the 60's I envisioned myself as a radical, voiced my beliefs to anyone who would listen, and sent off my opinion to anyone who would read it. I also espoused the 60's perspective that "establishment" organizations were all talk and little action. As was inevitable however, I, along with all the other "radicals," went to work, had a family and matured.

Along the way the importance of organized effort and active involvement was forcibly brought home when a past president of the MAAGCS said, "You have to become active! Spend some time as a director, become an officer, then you'll appreciate the contributions made by your peers and yourself in bettering this profession."

Active involvement has indeed altered my perspective of the association. While younger superintendents make giant leaps toward an objective, older superintendents walk toward it, perhaps conserving their stamina. Regardless of how they get there, all those committed cross the bridge to take up the task at hand.

Active involvement has also demonstrated that for any organization to move forward, it requires the fire of youth tempered by the experience of maturity.

And so, for those who mutter, either loudly or in whispers, their dissatisfaction with the MAAGCS — don't stop, just get involved. Attend, contribute, work on a committee, run for an elected position — be a radical but get involved!

## New Members/ Reclassifications

Chris Dieter, Class C  
Student, Virginia Tech

Rick Hildreth, Class B  
Asst. Superintendent, Columbia C.C.

Thomas J. Ritter, Class B  
Asst. Superintendent, Laytonsville G.C.

Tom Hurd, Class D to B

Lou White, Class A to E

Jack McClenahan, Class G  
Sales Representative, G.L. Cornell Co.

R. John Shields, Class F  
C.E.O., Glenn Dale G.C.