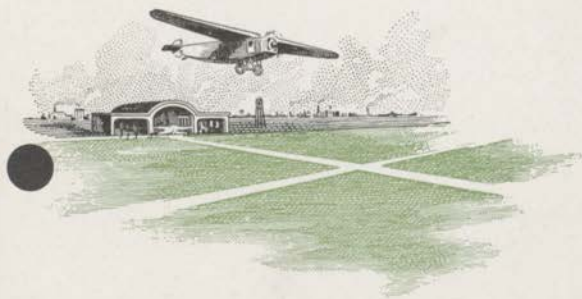


● | Turf
for
Airports




A definite place in aviation is conceded to **turf**. Regardless of how large the expanse—whether all over or simply a background for hard surface runways—turf is in the picture and it behooves airport operators to study approved methods of making and maintenance.

Drainage Important

Drainage, grading, seed bed preparation and fertilization are among the early construction problems to be met. Provision should be made to carry away surface water quickly. Grass does not thrive on stagnant water or in waterlogged soils. Furthermore the field that can be used with perfect safety after heavy rains is the well drained field. Grass growing is a science and the problem of proper and adequate drainage is a problem for solution by a drainage expert.

Site Considerations

The site for an airport is usually selected by virtue of accessibility and cost per acre. The type of soil that is in evidence cannot be considered. Very often the bulk of the acreage has been in meadow for years—no fertilizing done and the ground overrun with moss and sour grass—evidences of soil impoverishment. Such conditions cannot rightly be expected to produce a hardy, vigorous turf no matter what kind of seed is sown. Grass must be fed and a good foundation for



grass growing should be laid just as you would prepare a foundation for asphalt, concrete or brick. The turf fields which are outstanding successes today are those not hastily conceived but actually built from the ground up. Poor soil was improved by the replacing of the absent plant food elements, and the mechanical condition remedied by the application of manure, sand, or whatever is needed.

Preliminary Feeding

When turf is once established it is impossible to get phosphoric acid, one of the essential grass foods, down into the soil. Consequently a complete plant food with this element predominating should be worked into the ground prior to seeding, generally speaking, a 4-12-4, meaning four units each of nitrogen and potash and twelve of phosphoric acid. Applications should be made at the rate of from 500 to 1000 pounds per acre. Rotted manure when available should be used freely. Its humus content is very valuable.

When to Seed

Time of seeding is also quite important. In most sections early fall, between August 15th and September 15th, is best. New grass will then root deeper in preparation for cold weather, weeds are not so troublesome, while the warm fall rains and cool nights are just what grass likes. Another tendency of fall

sown grass is to stool or tiller out thus forming a thicker, more compact turf. These points are entitled to consideration in all turf production but particularly for airports where hardness and close knitting are most desirable.

Suitable Airport Grasses

Among the varieties of grass which have been found suitable for airport turf are the following: Kentucky Blue Grass, Red Top, the Fescues, Chewings, Sheeps and Meadow, Orchard Grass, English Rye Grass, the Bents, and Timothy. Several of the clovers have also proven satisfactory in the airport mixture since they are legumes and have some fertilizing value in addition to growing thickly and having a good root system. White clover, Alsike and Red Clover are the only varieties to be considered while in the south Japan Clover or Lespedeza is frequently used. Turf fields of longest standing have as their basis Kentucky Blue Grass, native to most localities and a hardy, long lasting grass, good to look at and easy to maintain. In extremely sandy soils it is less effective than Chewings Fescue.

Weed Possibilities

Because of their tenacity and hardness certain weeds are being used experimentally, their definite value not having yet been established. Of these weeds the most commonly discussed

are Yarrow and Quack Grass. Seed of the latter is quite rare but Yarrow is a cultivated crop in several foreign countries as the seeds have some medicinal value. Yarrow plants have a coarse, tough root while the leaves are fern-like and often lie flat on the ground, thus tending to prevent dirt and dust from rising.

Rate of Seeding

Seeding of a new port should be at the rate of one hundred pounds per acre although lighter seeding will suffice if the field is not to be used for a year. In order to seed a large area evenly, a seed drill or wheelbarrow grass seed sower will be found most convenient.

There is much to be learned about grass for airports. Turf ports that have proven unsatisfactory have usually been those constructed haphazardly and without consideration to the essentials of good grass growing. When aviation is as old as golf and the same scientific practices put into effect on airports as in golf course maintenance, turf will be the apple of the aviator's eye.

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