

My Experience With Bent Greens

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FOUR years ago my knowledge of bent greens should have had to be treated somewhat as the baby in the story was—they gave it garlic to find it in the dark! I had heard about them but hadn't seen any stolons except in Washington on one of my trips there.

But we decided to try one green. So in March or April of 1922 we sent down in Jersey for a few bags of the stolons. When they came through they seemed to me to be mostly mud, and we planted them in the green, only to be disappointed for the green was a rank failure. We didn't give up, though, and that spring we obtained some more stolons, known then as the Washington bent.

Running through the Sylvania course is quite a creek and in my wanderings along its banks I saw some grass that looked like bent, so sent some samples to Washington. The authorities there pronounced it good bent; then we proceeded to make a nursery bed, taking only the finest of specimens from the creek, and from this nursery we made our *first real bent green*.

Now in preparing for a bent green I simply make a good deep garden soil, but not too rich as I find this strain of bent does not require that. In fact my experience has taught me that too rich soil makes the bent grow coarse. You see this strain we use, now known as Sylvania Bent, is acclimated and grows just as well on poor blowy sand as it does on the heavier clay.

Two Kinds of Soil

The Sylvania course has two kinds of soil, the creek being the dividing line. On the one side is blowy sand that is here today and in the next township tomorrow if the wind is strong enough. It is 40 feet deep with no sub soil at all. While on the other side it is clay and the bent seems to do as well on the one side as the other; it shows no preference.

One of the factors in my experience, that enters into the making of a bent green good or good bent green, is the top dressing. In the spring of the year the first dressing they get is a rich one, two loads of good manure to one of sand, is about the proportion. And after that every four weeks as regular as clock work they get a top dressing of sand.

I have about six acres that I sow to rye to keep the sand from blowing away. And while this rye is plowed under, yet the soil won't raise a crop, but it

does make ideal dressing for greens after it has been properly worked.

Caring for a New Green

When the stolons begin to grow in a newly planted bent green, I let them go till there are about three joints above the ground, then roll them with a heavy roller after which the green is given a top dressing of fairly good sand. When the bent is high enough, the mowing machine is started and every four weeks it gets a top dressing the same as the older greens.

That leads up to still another factor in bent greens, and that is to keep the runners covered and keep the bent growing up straight. I believe that will prevent any nap.

The Sylvania bent greens have always been free from that defect and I think it is this method which has prevented it.

One point I'd like to emphasize is, that to be successful with bent greens it is necessary to be regular with your top dressing. By insisting that a certain day is for top dressing the Club members expect it and there will be no objections. Sylvania members are pretty well trained, now, thank you. *And use sand and then more sand.*

And another thing, while bent grows splendidly, it bears watching. I judge the condition of mine largely by the amount of clippings the grass catchers turn out. A day or two sometimes makes a great change. If the amount grows less and less, I know there is something wrong and get busy with the top dressing, giving them a good dose of Sulphate of Ammonia, followed by plenty of water, keeping the greens wet down to the depth of the cup. They respond quickly to this treatment.

While bent likes water, yet in a drouth it stands a lot of punishment. Owing to trouble with our water system and a signing off of showers from above, we were without water for thirteen days and at the end of that time the bent greens were still in good condition while the old grass greens looked pretty sick.

Bent Greens Free from Weeds

One feature in favor of bent greens that cheers the heart of the greenkeeper, is their freedom from weeds. I have two-year old bent greens which have not cost the club five dollars for weeding. And the seeded grass



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Cutting 'em Close at Sylvania

greens, well we've spent plenty on them. Weeds simply can't get through that turf, it's too thick and matted.

But weedless as they practically are, yet the brown patch gets into them during the hot sultry weather, and this pest is not to be ignored but met and mastered at once, if at all. My experience has shown me that the only real remedy is a top dressing of sand and a good dose of sulphate of ammonia followed up with a lot of water. This treatment turns the trick the quickest and most effectually of anything I've ever tried.

Now don't mistake me, I don't claim to be an expert in bent greens. All I know about them is what I've dug out by observation, experiments and mistakes.

One instance in the mistake line: I prepared three greens for bent, thinking I had plenty in the nursery bed for all three. But my judgment was wrong, there was just enough for two. So I took my men, went down to the creek, gathered thirty two baskets of the stolons and planted what is known as No. 1 green. It came up fine but there are five different strains of bent in that one green.

But for greens, I'm sold on the bent. It's easier to plant, comes up quicker, is easier to care for, free from weeds, except a few summer ones that are a result of the top dressings, and best of all it gives what a green is built for—a *perfect putting surface*.

Why I Use Charcoal

Bp JOHN MORLEY, President
The National Association of Greenkeepers of America

For some years I have found fine granulated or pulverized charcoal an aid in the keeping of good putting greens. I have been asked many times why I use this material on my greens, and there are several good reasons.

Perhaps the most important mission of charcoal in the soil is its moisture absorbing quality. Charcoal acts like a sponge in the soil, absorbing and retaining water gases and solutions. It shrinks very much in bulk when dried, and expands similarly when it takes up water. When soil comprising the putting green contains charcoal, it prevents the surface from cracking open in hot dry weather, and also helps to keep the nitrogen in the soil. On the other hand, when rain falls, charcoal in the soil expands and allows more water to enter the subsoil which can later be drawn up by the energy of the sunrays to the tiny hair roots of the grass plants.

An application of approximately 150 pounds to the ordinary sized putting green, either in the fall or the spring, is what I use at the Youngstown Country Club. I find that it improves a sticky clay soil, and encourages a clean growth of grass on my greens. Although not an available plant food, it contains carbon-dioxid, a gas from which grass plants can assimilate carbon, and carbon enters more largely into plant tissue than any other element.

GOLF MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

What puzzles you may be puzzling the other fellow. Send in your questions for the February issue of THE NATIONAL GREENKEEPER to 407 Caxton Building, Cleveland, Ohio.