

# Florida Greenkeeping

By LYMAN CARRIER

*Editor's Note:—Mr. Carrier was for many years connected with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, as agronomist in pasture and forage crop investigations. His work with the U. S. G. A. Green Section established the value of vegetative creeping bent for putting greens.*

**M**OST Florida golf courses appear neglected in summer. Golf there has in the past been considered a winter pastime. The courses have been built largely to meet the demand of the northern tourists who sojourn there for a few winter months. When the tourist season is over in the spring maintenance operations are cut to a minimum or cease altogether. The finer grasses languish and die out. Crab grass, Bermuda and a few weeds make a struggle for existence. In the fall there are hurried preparations to put the course again in condition for play. The greens are cut and raked and reseeded to redtop, rye grass or something similar. Greenkeeping under such conditions lacks something which the northern greenkeeper enjoys—there is not the satisfaction of creating a permanently beautiful scene.

There are lots of people who live in Florida the whole year and the play on some of the public golf courses where an attempt has been made to keep up playable conditions prove that the game is as popular there in summer as it is in the North. Some greenkeepers in Florida, however, seem to have the idea that the period of summer neglect is a necessary feature of golf course maintenance.

## *Black Muck for Top Dressing*

Ray Tower of the Forest Hills Golf Course, an excellent course located near Tampa, does not subscribe

to this theory. When I visited his layout late in June he had the best summer turf on his putting greens I ever saw in Florida. He was giving them the same care as is customary to give greens during the season of heaviest play. The Forest Hills Course was designed and built under the direction of J. Franklin Meehan, the well known golf architect and landscape artist of Philadelphia. Construction was started in January, 1926 and the course was ready for play the following October. The soil at Forest Hills is sand the same as is the case on nearly all of the Florida courses. During the construction the putting greens were given a covering of five inches of black muck from the bed of an old pond. Mr. Tower considers this top soil of muck over the sand as highly important in the matter of production of all-the-year-round turf in Florida. It keeps the loose sand from shifting, holds moisture, and as it is composed mostly of organic matter it furnishes more plant food to the grass than will the natural soil of the region.

## *Planting Bermuda by New Method*

The greens were planted with Bermuda grass by the vegetative method. It is customary in the South to plant the Bermuda stolons in shallow trenches. It has been



*Lyman Carrier*



*Number 1 green at the Forest Hills Club, Tampa, Florida*



done that way for years and many think it is the only way it can be done successfully. Tower had had experience with vegetative planting and could see no reason why the stolons could not be cut into short pieces and planted broadcast the same as is done with creeping bent. He finally persuaded those in charge to let him put in a green by his method. The result was a decided saving in labor and the ground was completely covered with turf in a much shorter length of time.

bone meal, and potash, leaving ammonium sulphate and ammonium phosphate as the only common commercial goods that are safe to use.

#### *Bermuda Needs Plenty of Fertilizer*

With Bermuda grass this restriction does not apply. There is no danger of promoting the growth of clover in Florida by the use of an alkaline fertilizer and all that Bermuda asks for is a square meal and is not overly particular about what it is fed. A good fertilizer for



*A view of Number 18 at Forest Hills*

Ray Tower is a firm believer in the liberal use of fertilizers under Florida conditions and it is difficult to see how good turf can be produced otherwise on thin sandy land. The Florida greenkeepers have much more freedom in the choice of fertilizing materials than have those in the North.

In the North where the bent grasses predominate for putting green purposes it has been proved to be advisable to keep the soil in an acid condition. To do this only such fertilizers should be used as do not leave an alkaline residue in the soil. This necessitates cutting out such common materials as nitrate of soda, acid phosphate,

turf should carry a high percentage of nitrogen, about half as much phosphoric acid as nitrogen and a small amount of potash.

Experiments with *Poa bulbosa*, the new winter bluegrass for the Southland, at Forest Hills gave very promising results. Although not planted until January it made sufficient growth so it was cut three times before it died down with the beginning of summer. If this is a sample of what is to be expected from this interesting little grass it may be suitable for use on the Bermuda greens instead of the redbot or rye grass to give the green turf during the winter.

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