Morley Discusses Brown Patch

THE brown patch contest in our magazine was certainly timely, and the large amount of brown patch that has prevailed will eventually turn out a blessing in disguise. The last two weeks I have been called to several clubs which have this dreaded disease. Just returned from Cambridge Springs and practically all greens that have Poa Annua are affected.

Now the main question is why does the grass get the disease at this period and the various bents appear to be immune. From close study and observation I am of the opinion that Poa Annua being one of the principal putting green grasses that make rapid growth in the spring is generally the first to become dormant. The other grasses are still very active and have not reached the dormant period, but will begin to show about the middle of August that it is their time to rest.

I am of the opinion that if the long period of humidity which we have just passed through had occurred later on that the Poa Annua would have commenced to produce or take on new life and very little of it would be affected and the velvet bents and other of this variety would suffer most. But I am also of the opinion that during the moulting or resting period of Poa Annua, sulphate of ammonia should not be applied for it does not take to it during excessive heat. To induce Poa Annua to continue active during the entire season it should have a slow acting fertilizer. One that is not acid.

We should avoid if possible from allowing putting greens to throw not more than about two baskets of clippings from a green each day. Too much forcing later on helps to produce trouble. When the disease first appears I think no chemicals or fertilizers should be applied until the disease has spent its force for I have observed that by so doing it scalds the turf affected and requires a longer period to bring it back.

I base this opinion from observation in my nursery. Every variety of grass with the exception of chewings fescue got brown patch. I gave them no treatment, but let them all alone to take care of themselves. To my surprise they have mostly all recovered, no patches scalded.

Is Top Dressing Responsible?

IN ORDER to ascertain if topdressing was responsible, all our greens had not been topdressed since April. Six of our putting greens were hit severely, especially Number 9 and Number 6. Number 17 which you know is practically 90 percent has no brown patch. I give it two treatments of Semesan, three pounds each time in three barrels of water. After the brown patch had hit the others, mostly Poa Annua greens I gave this a topdressing of compost.

After the grass had come fairly through I gave one-half of this putting green another heavy dressing of compost. I simply wanted to find out if my compost really created brown patch. So far there is no sign of any, in fact the part that received the second dressing appears at the present time healthier than the first. If the second dressing should produce fungi and the first not I will then realize that compost can become injurious to the plant.

A short time before the brown patch appeared I had topdressed Number 3 putting green with humus that had received special treatment, after it had been taken out of a lake in Superior. This putting green contains about 25 percent of Poa Annua and did not get any brown patch. I have given it to other greens the past week to observe if it gives the same results, but I have put it on only half of each putting green. On Number 9 which appears to have been hit the hardest I have given one-half of the putting green a topdressing of compost, the other half after fertilization I topdressed with silica sand. At the time of writing, which is August third, the humidity is very heavy.

A DuPont Test

ON NUMBER 7 putting green at the request of the DuPont Chemical company I have divided one-half of the putting green into five equal parts, each part or lane receiving a different treatment. I will endeavor to give in the next issue of the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER my observations and comments.

I have written the above information with but one object in view and that is to encourage the members of our fraternity to do likewise. For one of the chief aims of the association is along educational lines. If others would follow my example and forward their observations to the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER, so that we can all compare notes, and with so many greenkeepers working along different channels we will soon observe the cause of the brown patch disease.

It is up to us to find out for it is only natural that we cannot expect the leading chemical institutions to instruct their plant pathologists to give their time to discover the cause. It would eventually stop the sale of a preventive if we knew what was the cause of the brown patch disease.