

# Stolons Versus Seeds

## A Comparison of Cost and Quality

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**—While we do not agree entirely with some of the statements made by the author of this article we are publishing it just as it is written. This is in line with the policy of the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER to permit as far as possible free expression of opinion on the part of those qualified to write on greenkeeping subjects. We want our readers to feel free to send us any opinions they may have based upon practical experience which disagree with any article published in the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER.

ONE of the most interesting questions connected with bent grass is that of seed versus stolons. In order to make the question itself as clear as possible I am dividing it into three parts, as follows:

1. Will seed or stolons ultimately produce the better results?
2. Which will cost the less (a) to plant? (b) to maintain?
3. Having decided what would be the best to use, where can it be obtained?

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In answer to the first question it may be said right away that generalization is only possible to a very slight extent. All stolons will not produce better results than all seed, and all seed is not better than all stolons. Each kind should be finally judged upon its individual merits.


### Stolons Develop Identical Strains

IN A few respects, however, the results obtained from stolons may be compared with those from seed (collectively so-called.) There are several advantages in using stolons. Perhaps the most important is that, having used a particular strain on a green and seen the sort of turf which it produces, one may be absolutely certain of obtaining identical results by using that strain again. With seed, especially bent seed, there is always a risk that it will not produce consistent results. It may be true to name, so far as species and variety are concerned, but it is very seldom of one strain and there is, of course, a wide difference between the strains of bent grass.

Probably the nearest approach to uniformity in seed has been reached by the use of non-stoloniferous species, such as redtop and Rhode Island bent. Seed growers, both in the East and in the West, have put on the market seed that produces very fairly uniform turf, but I have not seen any that possessed the absolute homogeneity that is obtained by using stolons.

The Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station is now conducting a series of experiments as a result of which seed of "creeping bent," velvet bent and *maritima* will be produced from selected strains of each. Whether this seed will produce turf identical with that from which the seed is obtained is problematical. If it does, the main advantage of using stolons will have been overcome.

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There are, however, other points, about stolons in general which will always be in their favor. One is that, in using stolons, one can depend on a certain measure of success if they are given any attention at all. They will ultimately take possession of the ground, in spite of poor preparation and treatment, but seeding grass is always delicate and is more liable to suffer loss. Once stolons are rooted (within, say, two weeks from the time of planting) the little plants are mature and they will withstand washing due to heavy rains, or trampling, far better than will seedling grass. Weeding may be undertaken earlier than is advisable with a seeded lawn.

On the other hand, it is not by any means certain that a stolon green, because it is uniform, is uniformly good. Some of them are uniformly bad. The same name has not infrequently been given to different strains and different names to the same strains. It is always better, if possible, to start with a small piece of sod and propagate your own. Where there is not the time to do this and it has to be bought it is very advisable to purchase material that has been grown from one of the strains developed by the United States Golf Association Green Section at Arlington Farm. The Metropolitan, Washington and Virginia are the best of these—apart from the creeping velvet bents which are now being developed. I personally prefer the Metropolitan strain to any other and there has been no confusion at any time as to which strain the name applies to.

#### Stolon Greens Need More Dressing

**A**LL of the "creeping bents" just mentioned seem to require more dressing than is necessary on a seeded green, but provided they get it, and are prevented from becoming spongy, soft and slow, they will produce as excellent putting surfaces as can be obtained.

As to the relative costs, it is certainly true to say that the amount necessary to bring a lawn or a green to maturity will vary considerably whichever method be used. As a generalized guess I would say that the cost of using stolons is 10 per cent higher, on the average, than the cost of seeding. No doubt in some cases it costs twice as much to plant and raise one green

from stolons as another one from seed; but it should not, and there are times when we have to re-seed due to losses which would not have occurred if stolons had been used.

It seems time that someone made a study of the relative costs, for though there would no doubt be a wide range of difference as between the high and low cost of each method it might be seen that the means were not so far apart. Or it might be found that the average cost of a stolon lawn was 100 per cent higher than the average of a seeded one. But whatever might be the result of the statistics I do not believe that the cheaper method would be the more economical if the results were in any respect inferior.

#### Best Is Always Cheapest

**T**HE same is true of maintenance. Stolons may cost more as regards mowing and dressing, but as a rule they cost considerably less in weeding. Whatever difference there may be it is not sufficient to justify one in using anything but the very best. Seed may be both better and cheaper, generally speaking, and if you think so and know of something that

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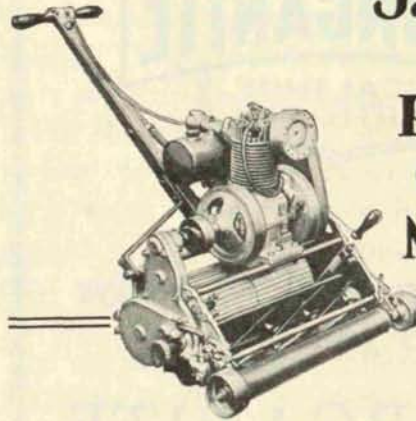
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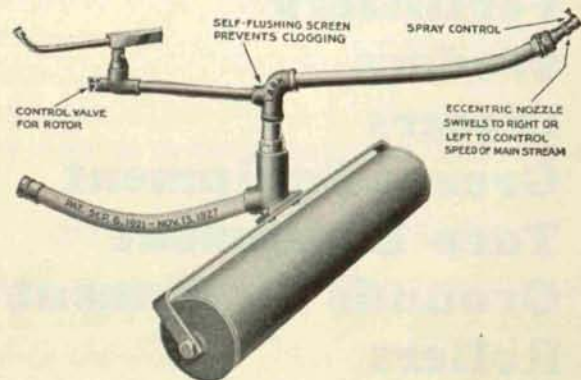
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As regards the sources from which stolons should be obtained, the U. S. G. A. Green Section would send any greenkeeper a square foot of sod, from which a small piece of turf could be grown. A sample of stolons of the same name, bought from any of the numerous dealers, could be compared with this turf and if it did not prove better one could always try another dealer. On the whole there is less likelihood of getting misnamed stolons than there is of getting misnamed seed.

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