

# Education of Greenkeepers

By PROFESSOR L. S. DICKINSON

*Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass.*

Address delivered at the National Greenkeepers Convention at Buffalo, Feb. 15, 1929

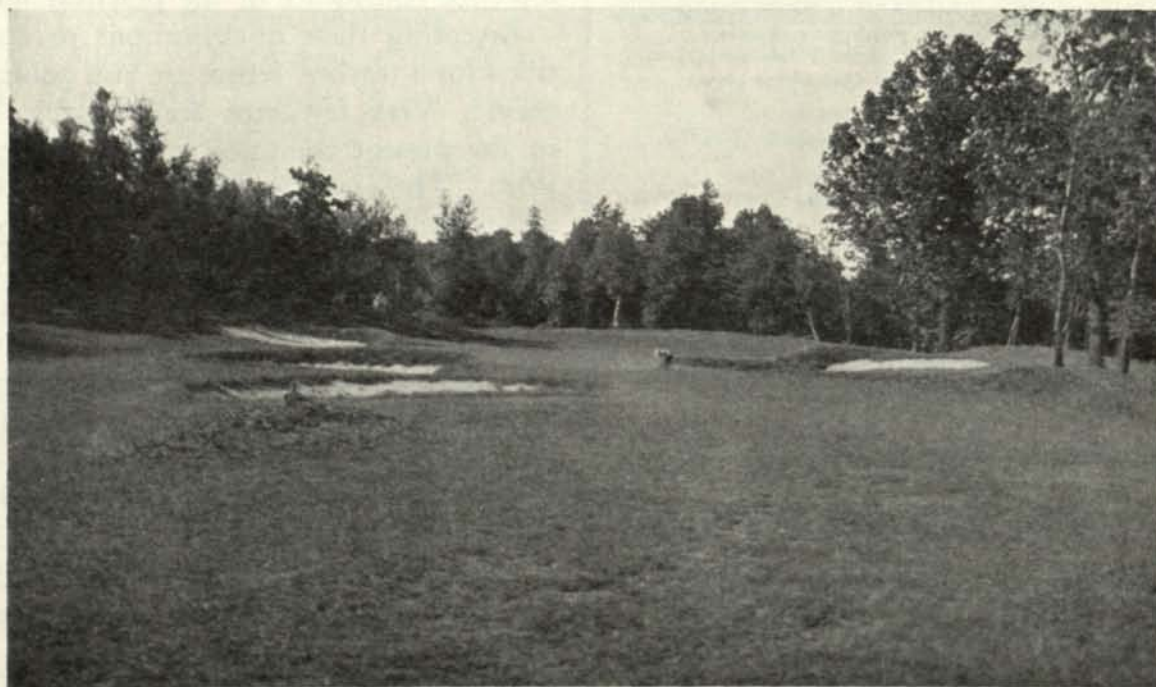
NO ONE appreciates more than I do, the delicacy of the subject I have been asked to speak upon, "The Education of the Greenkeeper." However, whatever general opinion is, I believe one should speak with the conviction of mind, and let others judge the merits. I will begin with a story.

Little Tommy was asked by his uncle, what he learned in school that day. "I learned lots of things," replied Tommy, "And one of them was that this world is round and turns on a swivel thing like the great globe in the school-room." "Did you?" asked his uncle; "What do you think of that?" "I think," said Tommy after pondering a while, "that teacher is asking me to believe a good lot for a small boy."

Tommy's answer showed that he had not been properly prepared for the phenomenon or he would have accepted and understood the fact without doubt. He believed it, because of faith in his teacher. A demonstration

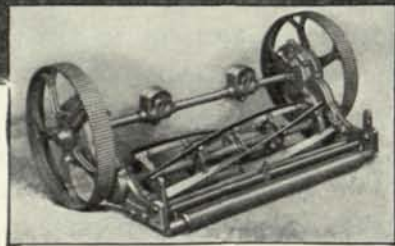
would have given him more confidence. The teacher, however, had a complete understanding of the child's mind, his handicaps, and joys, and with such an understanding created the confidence. Later on in life "Tommy" learned the scientific principles involved.

The turf expert's advice in many instances obviously seems a "whole lot for me to believe." The greenkeeper believes the advice either because he has faith in the expert, or because he can think of no counter argument, or because the chairman tells him to believe it. If the advice works, faith in the expert is increased and all is well. If for some reason such as, poor manipulation, carelessness, or because the expert failed to have a complete understanding of the whole situation, the advice failed, faith is weakened and confidence lost. Who is at fault? The expert as much as the greenkeeper, for a complete understanding by him would have instilled confidence into the greenkeeper and made him realize the



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necessity for proper technique and carefulness.

### Who Is Qualified?

WHO is qualified to be a teacher to educate the greenkeeper? That is the next logical question which should be decided upon before any educational work is undertaken. A most important qualification is that the teachers must be none but those who can actually "feel" the greenkeepers part. The sorrows, joys, disappointments, and praises. The teacher must have felt the workman's emotions. He should have had actual experience with pick, shovel and mower. Those are the first set of requirements for a teacher.

The second set requires that the teacher should have had practical experience in handling men, especially small groups of men, for I think it is more difficult in many ways to successfully boss a gang of twelve men than five hundred.

The teacher must also have technical training, all he can get, and in as many lines as possible. Don't belittle the value of technical training. But! the teacher must use the technical training only to the point of its practical application to the work at hand. That point of practical application varies on every golf course and with every greenkeeper. If the teacher goes too far beyond that point he loses the confidence of the practical mind.

Accepting these qualifications or specifications for a teacher, where are you going to get them? Very few men are available because of the present condition of the golfing universe. The greenkeeper who started 20 years ago is the logical man, and will well qualify. But! are you going to leave your position to become a teacher at a salary of three-fifths or two-thirds your present wage? Of course you are not; but you are automatically eliminated by the attractiveness of your present position. The college professor has to accept as a part of his salary the satisfaction of seeing his students succeed.

The college man who has been on the job, for three years, qualifies well in all ways but the first requirement, that of complete understanding. He also lacks experience.

The elimination of these two men, places the responsibility to furnish teachers upon the

colleges and the men must come from their staffs on which there are many practical men. Perhaps you have raised the question, "Shall or should the greenkeeper be taught or educated," whichever you may call it. Your answer is, certainly, greenkeeping is a profession (it most certainly is) and men are educated in the other professions.

Business concerns that employ men spending \$20,000 or more annually, employ trained men and a greenkeeper spends at least that amount. Greenkeeping is comparable to farming, fruit growing or floriculture and men are taught to become farmers, pomologists and florists.

### Greenkeeping Cannot Be Taught

SO FAR your arguments appear sound, but I believe greenkeeping should not, at least at the present time, be taught. In other words, one cannot teach greenkeeping. The accepted meaning of "teaching" is "to tell how." A teacher of greenkeepers cannot do that; too many influencing factors that are unknown to the teacher are involved.

If greenkeeping cannot be taught, what can be done, you ask? Greenkeeping should be acquired or assimilated, might be a good word. The broad meaning of the word teaching should be used. That broad meaning is "to give intelligence concerning." To use my pet phrase, "Our course at the Massachusetts Agricultural College is for greenkeepers and not in greenkeeping."

I had a very flattering letter the other day from a chairman who wanted a greenkeeper. He wrote "I understand that you give a course which considers the greenkeepers' problems."

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He is right! and a course with that idea will be successful. It certainly is at M. A. C.

To whom shall the opportunity to receive education be given? Any one? NO! Absolutely no! Because the education for the position of greenkeeper is just starting, and now is the time to make careful and strict prerequisites. If that is done and continued, the supply of qualified graduates can be controlled as to quality and numbers.

### Who Is Qualified For Study

**T**HREE groups appear as qualified. One—the active greenkeeper and assistant greenkeeper. The majority should come from this group. A school for these men must of necessity come in the winter.

Two—caddies, sons of chairmen, sons of greenkeepers, and professionals. Young men who have had not much experience as workmen on a golf course, yet who have been reared in a golfing atmosphere. A different course can be offered these men. Should they have four years of college? Yes, if they can afford the money and time. They will be broader visioned men if they do take it. Do

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they require four years of college? No, a two-year course can be made sufficient, providing the first summer of such a course is required to be spent working on a golf course under a successful greenkeeper. Such a method is practiced at the Massachusetts Agricultural College.

The third group, new men or new blood. This should be the smallest group in numbers but is very important, for new blood is always healthful. It is poor practice to inbreed. These young men should be picked from applicants who are attracted to the profession because of the love of the soil, and a sincere desire to become greenkeepers. They should be discouraged by all the doleful tales possible, told of all the trials and tribulations of a greenkeeper and then, if they still desire to come, take them for they will make good greenkeepers.

Training for this group should be two terms in college studying general maintenance problems, such as roads, walks, shrubbery care, and fundamentals in soils and grasses. These two terms should be followed by six months



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training on an approved golf course. The greenkeepers taking these men should be entirely in sympathy with the college idea, and should endeavor to give the boys as much practical training as possible. However, the boys must not be favored in any other way than being given a variety of jobs.

If they fail to satisfy the greenkeeper, fire them from both the course and college. If they live through the ordeal, they should be required to return in October for a full college year of technical training. Again the Massachusetts Agricultural College is used as an example.

The responsibility for the selection of this new blood should be equally divided between the colleges and the greenkeepers.

What are the duties of a teacher, or what shall be taught? I'll describe briefly our methods at M. A. C.

#### The Winter School at M. A. C.

THE winter school for active greenkeepers is an intensive course, the men working in class room or laboratory eight hours a day, five days a week. The subjects studied are

motors, water systems, equipment, grasses, grass seeds, soils, fertilizers, landscape arrangement, cost keeping and analysis, (you know your costs are not worth much unless they are analysed) and managerial problems. Every bit of the work is done with the practical results in mind.

In the two year course, the men are given enough golf architecture to make them appreciate their unfitness to become golf architects (that is a profession of its own) and to also realize how golf architecture and maintenance costs are allied. We do not teach golf architecture.

Should there be any hard and fast rules given by the instructor?

No. Of course there are chemical formulas that are fixed, and mechanical laws that cannot be broken, and all the fundamentals of the various subjects should be given as hard facts.

Why no facts! Because every tee, every fairway, every green, yes every trap on every golf course presents an individual problem.

Every possible condition should be noted for each general problem. In other words the



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instructor must be the "Pros" if the "Cons" are the students and the "Cons" if the "Pros" are to be educated. One must go around the entire 360° of the circle. Such training will permit the greenkeeper to be better able to diagnose his turf, machinery, cost, or water system trouble, and properly prescribe for the particular problem.

In the study of equipment it is particularly necessary for the instructor to refrain from any influencing talk, yet he must see that every good and bad feature of a machine is discussed. I want to say here that if it wasn't for the help and co-operation given us by all equipment manufacturers, seedsmen and all the departments of our college, we could not possibly do the successful job that is being done now.

With such a training as I have briefly described, given in a practical atmosphere, the greenkeeper will be able to meet the problems with intelligence and confidence.

Gentlemen: In closing I'm going to quote from Elbert Hubbard because I think he sums up the whole situation:

"The only time a man grows is when he is green. The moment he thinks he is ripe, he starts to get rotten."

## Tournament Schedule

### May

- 6 British Open Muirfield.
- 9-10 Ladies' International Matches, St. Andrews.
- 10-12 Monterey Peninsula C. C. Invitation, Del Monte.
- 13 British Ladies' Championship, St. Andrews.
- 27 British Amateur, Royal St. George's, Sandwich.

### June

- 5-8 Westchester Co. Amateur, Green Meadow C. C., Harrison.
- 10 Section Qualifying, National Open, St. Albans G. C., L. I.
- 17 Irish Amateur, Portmarnock.
- 27-29 National Open, Winged Foot Club, Mamaroneck, N. Y.

### July

- 8-13 Western Amateur, Mission Hills, C. C., Kansas City, Mo.
- 9-12 California Junior, Del Monte.
- 12-15 Metropolitan Amateur, Montclair G. C., N. Y.
- 18-20 Metropolitan Open, Lido C. C., Long Beach, L. I.
- 24-26 Metropolitan Junior, Morris Co. G. C., Convent Station, N. J.
- 26-28 Gold Mashie, Ocean Links, Newport, R. I.

### August

- 1-4 N. Y. State Amateur, Mohawk G. C., Schenectady.
- 5-7 L. I. Open, Salisbury Links, Salisbury Plains.
- 8-10 N. J. Open, Elmwood G. C., Paterson, N. J.
- 26-31 Women's Western, Mayfield C. C., Cleveland, O.

### September

- 2-7 National Amateur, Pebble Beach, Cal.
- 5-6 L. I. Senior, Wheatley Hills G. C., E. Williston
- 9 Irish Open Amateur, Portrush
- 10 Westchester Co. Senior, Scarsdale G. C., Hartsdale
- 17-18 Metropolitan Seniors, Hudson River C. C., Yonkers
- 23-25 Westchester Co. Open, Gedney Farm G. C.
- 24-25 French Open, Forqueux, France
- 30 Women's National, Oakland Hills, Birmingham, Mich.

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Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Robt. E. Power, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor of the National Greenkeeper and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, The National Greenkeeper, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio; Editor, Managing Editor and Business Manager Robt. E. Power, Cleveland, Ohio.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.)

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 11th day of April, 1929  
ROBERT E. POWER, Editor  
H. W. Slack  
My commission expires Jan. 8, 1932