

Greenkeeping Problems in Canada

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Toronto Golf Club, Long Branch, Ont.

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WHEN asked by our worthy President, Mr. Morley, to give a paper titled "Greenkeeping Problems in Canada," I consented, fully aware of the fact that it would be impossible for me to do justice to the article covering the whole Dominion of Canada from coast to coast, with such a vast difference in climatic conditions, soil, etc.

In northern Ontario, and east of us to the Province of Quebec, the seasons are much shorter and winters more severe, so that their problems or at least some of them would be different than ours in Ontario. But leaving climatical conditions out of the picture for a while, the greenkeeper's problem would chiefly be grasses.

Grass—The Earth's Richest Garment

IT seems perfectly natural for a man to specialize in fruit, in rose culture, herbaceous and Alpine plants or in orchids, for it is so obvious that to excel in any of these popular and much patronized branches of the garden craft one requires to make it his main, if not his whole study.

But grass that is green only, and not of so many colors—grass that grows to be mown, and rolled, grass that grows so often where it is not wanted even in paths and roadside, what need indeed can there be to specialize in this? That indeed would be more apparent if a knowledge of grass were more prevalent with our club officials and green committees. For strangely enough many that possess good greens and fairways have very little knowledge of the fine grasses and their requirements so necessary to maintain a course in perfect condition. In the past many failures indicate a lack of essential knowledge and prove beyond doubt the urgent need of a close study of grass.

It is astonishing how many people have the idea that all grasses are practically alike, without giving the matter much real thought. They have a sort of notion that grass grows on lawns or any place under adverse circumstances and with little or no nourishment and other cultural aid. It would be quite unnecessary to look upon putting greens as requiring special cultural treatment. Herein lies the secret of many failures in the past, for the first essential to success is a close acquaintance with the many varieties of grass, their natural characteristics, the conditions under which they thrive and the amount of hard wear they are capable of enduring. Then can we arrive at a clear understanding of the kinds that can be expected to thrive in a particular soil or situation and to blend mixtures that will suit all particular purposes. There are fine mixtures that will produce a smooth sward to make a good bowling or putting green that would be totally unfit for the purpose of football or cricket.

The Greenkeeper's Task

QUITE naturally a man who has kept a plot of grass neat and tidy on a private estate and has mowed and rolled, weeded, patched in season, may consider himself qualified for the task of maintaining a golf course, arguing that it is precisely the same kind of work on a larger scale with only the difference of larger implements and labor to get over the work. That experience in the proper care of lawns will be of service to one who aspires to greenkeeping is not to be denied, but it will prove seriously inadequate if he should shoulder at once the full responsibility of the upkeep of a golf course. The task being as distinct from ordinary lawn work as the cropping of a kitchen garden is from the entire management of a farm.

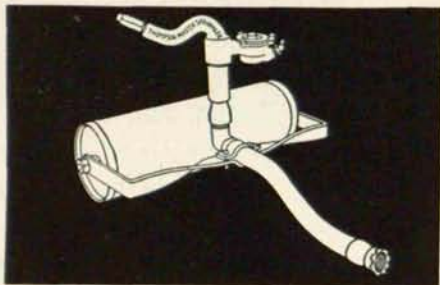


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The putting green is, of course, of paramount importance and it is here that the finest work is required. The turf must be ideal, or at any rate it must be the aim of the greenkeeper to make it so; an intimate knowledge of weeds, insects, and fungoid pest and vermin, and the surest and cheapest methods of getting rid of them will be essential. He must also have a wide knowledge of feeding grasses which of necessity differ considerably where so large and varied an area is concerned from the ordinary method of nourishing a small lawn.

The Nourishment of Grasses

THE management of grass demands knowledge, experience and forethought, as well as manual labor. Mowing and rolling are essential, while other matters of fully equal importance are frequently neglected or otherwise ignored. It should be borne in mind that every time a green is mown a great deal of grass growth is cut and removed, the production of which helps to exhaust nourishment from the soil.

No farmer expects to grow crops continuously for a succession of years without changing crops and manuring the land, and it becomes equally futile to expect to maintain a golf course in fine condition without periodically replenishing the store of plant food upon which the roots of grass may feed. We cannot manure turf as we do a corn or potato patch. The feeding of green and fairways must be accomplished by fine methods. Whatever nourishment is to be applied must be given in the form of a top-dressing, and it is therefore desirable that highly concentrated plant food should be used, thus reducing bulk to a minimum. Further they shall be quickly soluble that they may be readily washed down to the roots of the turf by rain or watering, leaving the surface clean and playable. Upon the character of the soil depends to a large degree the nature of manure it requires to improve its productive power.

It would be ridiculous to suppose that one may write an article or a book laying down definite instructions on the planning and construction of a golf course that will serve as a faithful guide under all circumstances and conditions: not one volume, but a series of books

might well be written upon the subject all full of interest and useful information.

The greenkeeper has a varied as well as extensive charge; his greens may be compared with the finest, but the fairways must be kept under control and this calls for a different method than those applied to greens. Club officials have long recognized the fact that to maintain good putting greens they must be top-dressed, fertilized and watered; not so with fairways which are usually left to look after themselves outside of cutting and rolling in season.

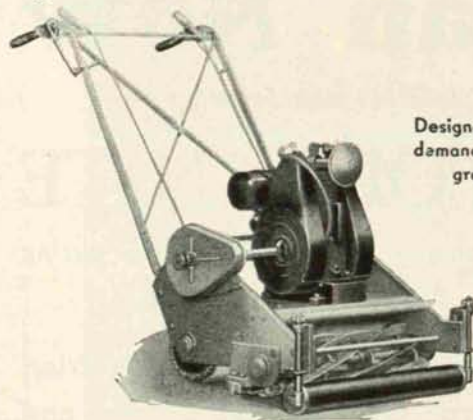
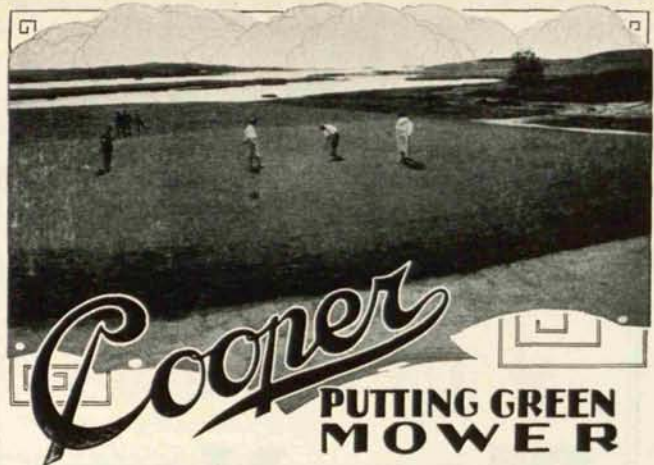
More Attention to Fairways

THIS is one of our great problems we have to face in Canada. The present day golfer demands better fairways. Generally speaking there usually is plenty of grass on our fairways, but how often do we see it undernourished.

Plants require food just as animals do. Greens are top-dressed and fed regularly, but fairways are more or less neglected. Club officials would do well to appropriate a sum of money each year for fertilizing fairways. On established courses where the turf is thin, top-dressing with compost would be too costly. Unless the club owned land not in use one could not get top soil for the purpose of top-dressing.

Fairways would be greatly benefited by the use of good top soil. When turf is thin and undernourished, weeds and clover will take possession—a sure sign of the absence of proper fertilizer. If a well-balanced fertilizer suited to the particular soil were used, the grass would respond. Two great drawbacks in Canada are insufficient moisture for the ideal turf production and the shortness of the seasons.

Last summer, for an example, with very little or no rain from the end of June till October, undoubtedly our fairways suffered during that long period of drought, more especially on light sandy soils. I am expecting to find turf on our fairways to be very much thinner at the arrival of spring as the result of the prolonged dry spell of last summer. Unless the soil contains sufficient properly balanced plant food the grass plant will not spread and cover the ground; weeds will come into the thin spots

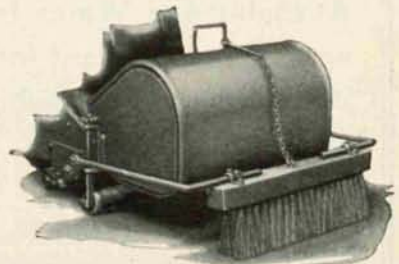


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and rob the grass of what plant food may be there. A very important factor in maintaining the fertility of a soil is the upkeep of its humus contents.

Fertilizing to Eliminate Weeds

WE HAVE seen the effects of fertilizing in eliminating weeds from greens. With so many different kinds of fertilizer on the market, the selection of a fertilizer is no small item of golf course maintenance, but one that must be carefully considered, and how much should be applied per acre.

Top-dressing with compost and the use of fertilizer will improve our fairways to a large extent, but alone will not certify a green turf, during the hot summer months. It must have water to insure this. No golfer of today wants to play on turf that is parched and the soil hard baked for the want of moisture. An irrigated course is essential to real golf and the maintaining of a good green turf with a climate such as ours.

The work of top-dressing should be done as early in the fall as possible, the month of October being the best month for this work. Material for this should be all prepared in readiness so that there can be no delay in the work proceeding, and play not interfered with. This also applies to fertilizing fairways early in the month of October, better still September, providing there is enough moisture in the land.

A great mistake in the past has been with the clubs not taking full advantage of the fall of the year when weather conditions are ideal for work of this kind. They put off a great many of the most important items of the season's work till spring with the result that it is very rarely done at all.

Club officials who are thinking of using fertilizer in the spring for the improvement of fairways would do well to apply fertilizer as early in the month of April as possible to insure getting the best results, bearing in mind that often-times the month of May is dry. This work should be left entirely to the greenkeeper; he will see that the time is used to the best advantage to get best results for the money spent, and to show results by improving his

fairways to the satisfaction of the club's Green committee.

New Fairways

IF CLUBS would spend a little more time and money in the preparation of fairways before seeding a course, it would well repay them in results. This can be accomplished by ploughing under a liberal supply of barnyard manure or by sowing oats or any green crop and ploughing under. Either method will afford ample humus and fertilizer to give the new seed a good start. After two years it may be necessary to work out a system of fertilization to keep the grass growing in a healthy condition.

A CORRECTION

In the December issue of the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER on How We Maintained Our Golf Courses in 1929, you have my letter headed "Heavy Rolling Makes Healthy Turf."

When I wrote this letter I wanted to make it plain that heavy rolling does not make healthy turf as I found by using heavy mowers on one nine and light ones on the other nine.

I wish you would correct this in an early issue.

(Signed) Lawrence Huber, Greenkeeper
Elks Country Club
Worthington, Ohio

Hyper-Humus

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W. W. Rhodes,
Green Committee, Wilmington Country Club, Wilmington, Delaware.

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