

Greenkeepers' Program of Self-Education

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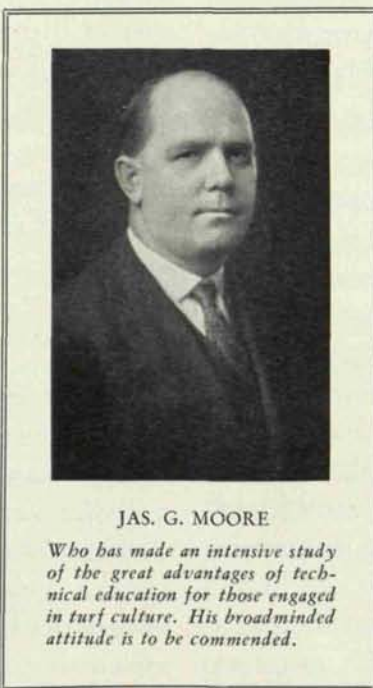
Reprinted from address delivered at the Annual Greenkeepers' Educational Conference in Chicago.

IT IS a very common pastime to look at the other fellow's work and think "what a simple job." Possibly there is no harm in that sort of sport although we might be quite surprised if we attempted to do his work. It is serious, however, when we look at our own job and fail to appreciate its complexities and problems, and to think that after all it consists largely in nothing but routine.

Almost any job which has in it any possibilities for advancement, has its difficult problems and he who fails to recognize them will not hold that job for long. It is almost as fatal to recognize that problems exist and have no conception as to how they may be met. A man's job on his job then, is to equip himself to recognize the problem and so far as possible successfully solve it.

You probably all recall the day when it was commonly held that even though a man had failed at everything else he could still become a farmer. I suppose that such an opinion has prevailed ever since man began other pursuits than hunting and farming. Although it has taken a long time we are now coming to recognize that to be a real farmer, one who makes a success of the venture, under seemingly ever-increasing difficulties, must know much more than how to hold a plow in the soil, sow seed, and reap and thresh his crop. Successful farming today means knowledge along numerous lines and only he succeeds who equips himself with this knowledge.

Quite generally greenkeeping is looked upon today as was farming 25 or 30 years ago. There are many who seemingly think that anyone can be a greenkeeper. Such beliefs even crop out among boards of directors and officers of golf clubs,



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Who has made an intensive study of the great advantages of technical education for those engaged in turf culture. His broadminded attitude is to be commended.

when they should recognize that the most important person in the whole organization so far as the kind of a course they are to have is the greenkeeper. I fear there are altogether too many greenkeepers who have also failed to recognize this fact or at least, if they have recognized it have made little attempt to fit themselves so as to be able to live up to the responsibility of their position.

GREENKEEPERS ARE MADE,
NOT BORN

GOOD greenkeepers are made, not born, and there is no one so largely responsible for the making as the greenkeeper himself. The wide-

awake, progressive greenkeeper who appreciates his responsibilities and who wants to make himself indispensable to his club (and right now that's a rather desirable situation to be in) will have a multitude of things on which he should have more information. Like the farmer, a greenkeeper will never know all the things which would be of advantage to him, but the more of them he does know the more capable he will be in approaching the idealistic conditions which at least the playing membership expects him to maintain.

GREENKEEPER NEEDS KNOWLEDGE

WHAT the average greenkeeper needs is knowledge and still more knowledge. It has been only a comparatively short time since golf in the United States reached the magnitude where more than a few have been giving much attention to the many problems incident to producing and maintaining good greens and fairways.

Some turf problems are unsolved and possibly some are unsolvable, but the research work on turf problems carried on in this country for the past ten

years and the research work on related problems, extending back many years, have resulted in an accumulation of information which, if applied, will correct numerous unfavorable conditions now found on many golf courses. This information is available to the greenkeeper who is awake to his needs and to the desirability of improving his methods. Therefore, the greenkeeper cannot be excused if he plods along in the same old rut and fails to avail himself of such information and also the new information relating to his problems which is probably accumulating more rapidly now than ever before.

The subject assigned me really is to answer the question of how the greenkeeper can come into possession of this information. First, let me state that I believe that a good, practical course in a college of agriculture would be an invaluable asset to anyone who is to follow greenkeeping. Do not misunderstand me; I do not mean to imply that such a course is necessary to successful greenkeeping but it would give one a background which would make it possible for him to more quickly recognize many greenkeeping problems and make it easier for him to solve them under his own particular conditions. From the very beginning it would supplement his practical experience and enable him to plan his operations so as to obviate difficulties which might arise due to faulty practice. College training cannot replace practical experience but it will radically modify many of the impractical rules based solely upon experience and often faulty as regards the fundamental principle involved.

So far as I know there is no long course in greenkeeping offered by any college but the liberality in elective courses in many of our colleges would enable one to largely pursue subjects fundamental to greenkeeping.

Recognizing the needs of greenkeepers for help on their problems, several colleges of agriculture have instituted short courses for them. The plans of the various courses differ materially but all of them have the same basic idea; to bring before the greenkeeper some of the fundamentals upon which the production and maintenance of desirable turf depend. The problems of those organizing such courses have been quite as troublesome as some of yours but I am sure that the response on the part of greenkeepers has fully justified any labor which has been put upon them.

To me there has been one discouraging feature connected with the courses which we have offered at Wisconsin. It is the seeming lack of interest in this enterprise on the part of the officials of a majority of golf clubs. I am willing to concede that probably the greenkeeper is most largely concerned but the golf club is also concerned. I think it should be concerned enough to cooperate with the greenkeeper to the extent of helping him meet at least a part of the expense in his attendance upon such a course. A short course is not a holiday, it's real work. It's a mighty poor course or an unusually dumb greenkeeper that would not pay a profit to the club in a single year even though it paid all the legitimate expense its greenkeeper incurred in attending such a course.

COLLEGE COURSES ARE NECESSARY

AS THE first method in self education of the average greenkeeper I would advise attending a short course. Can reading bulletins and periodicals or studying books substitute for it? In my opinion they cannot entirely. First of all there is the stimulation which comes from association with others having like interests. Then there are the questions which arise in the consideration of every subject, possibly little points not made fully clear. Who answers them when you read an article or a book? At the course there's the man who has specially considered the subject and has the explanation or the brother greenkeeper whose experience enables him to give just the needed bit of information.

Don't get the idea that the college instructional staff are the only ones who contribute knowledge at these courses. Not an inconsiderable amount of it is furnished by the greenkeepers. But whatever the source of knowledge the discussion following the presentation of the subject matter is a feature which can only be had when there is a group.

Being a pedagog you would expect that my next suggestion would be text books. But I can hear you say, "there aren't but two or three text books on greenkeeping." That's probably true if we are looking for texts which attempt to cover the subject quite fully. Well, say we start with them. Now unless I'm mistaken, you are going to find advice in them which you are confident you know perfectly well "won't hold water." The chances are that you may be right. But are you sure you are right? Quite

likely that advice is based upon certain underlying principles with which you are not familiar. Well, what are they and has the author made the right deductions concerning them?

Immediately you want other authority and doubtless what you need is not to be found in books on golf at all but in a treatise on soils, drainage, plant nutrition, or fertilization. At once your book horizon widens for you want a more extended discussion of the subject than that given in the text. If you pursue the quest, the number of books and the variety of subjects treated will continually broaden and in their study, your knowledge of the principles underlying greenkeeping will also broaden. I am not going to give you a suggested list of books which you might or ought to read, principally because my other duties have prevented me giving the time necessary to prepare such a list.

GOLF PUBLICATIONS ARE VALUABLE

THE Bulletin of the U. S. G. A. green section brings me to the next source of self-education for the greenkeeper. Were I a greenkeeper I am very certain that I would not be without that periodical. It is the official medium of so much information which is vital to successful greenkeeping that it can be listed as almost indispensable. Nor in this connection would I overlook the value of other golf publications. I do not follow them closely and so am not in a position to even suggest which the greenkeeper would find most helpful. I am confident, however, that in any of them and in practically any issue, the greenkeeper could glean ideas or get suggestions which would be helpful in a more efficient performance of his duties.

After all, most successful greenkeeping is not confined just to care of greens and fairways, and a broader view of what is taking place on golf courses and a knowledge of the viewpoint of the other fellow may help in making our work more efficient or indicate how the club member or official can be brought to a fuller appreciation of the greenkeeper's problem and of the service he renders.

In the use of the periodical as a source of information it is not enough just to read an article on a certain subject and then trust that you will remember it. It is not possible for anyone to remember all the things he ought to remember. So, if after all you are to benefit by your reading, you will need to

know where to find the information later on when you desire to use it. This will involve at least, filing the periodical or the article. It should probably also involve providing a method of locating the article without searching page by page through a great number of magazines. This can be done easily and efficiently by first noting on a small card the subject of the article. If the title does not carry the information which would make the article readily available, invent a title of your own.

Suppose we had a title like, "A new method of controlling brown patch." It would be rather difficult to locate the article using that title. Let's name the article, "Brown patch control." Your difficulty immediately vanishes. The card would also carry the name of the periodical and either the publication date or the volume and number and page number. If later on, another article on brown patch control appeared you would simply put on your brown patch card the data as to where it could be located. If one follows this practice he will soon find that he is accumulating a store of valuable information which is almost immediately available when needed.

Some greenkeepers may be so fortunate as to be able to frequently visit some of the experimental fields of turf culture. A first-hand study of the work being done there would certainly yield information of great value to one interested in fertilization, turf maintenance, mowing, and other phases of golf course management which are ever present with the greenkeeper. Nor does he need to confine his visits of inspection to experimental plots. Every golf course is in essence a golf experimental station. While no two courses are identical in the details of the problems they present nor handled in exactly the same way, yet there is enough similarity in conditions to make it possible to learn from a study of the other fellow's methods. Not always will such study result in learning what to do, but frequently learning what not to do is of just as great importance and of course the other fellow often does things he ought not to do.

NO TRADE SECRETS

ONCE knew a strawberry grower who would never tell any other strawberry grower anything about the methods he used. He seemed to consider them trade secrets. I hope there are no greenkeepers

who feel that their methods are trade secrets. One of the best ways of self education is to talk over our successes and failures with the man who is in the same line of work. The principle upon which meetings of this kind is based is the mutual exchange of information and ideas. If we were unwilling to do that a meeting would be of little value. We can possibly to a lesser extent, profit by a mutual exchange of ideas when the numbers involved are just two perplexed greenkeepers.

I believe that another means of self education for the greenkeeper is playing golf—by all means playing his own course and it would also be desirable to play other courses. I know the danger that lies in this type of instruction but I have faith in the greenkeepers that they will not specialize in it to the extent of causing their work to be neglected, as is frequently the case with some of the club members. In the first place the greenkeeper who plays golf is in a much better position to judge of the sort of playing conditions he is providing than if he has merely a theoretical basis for his judgment as to what are good playing conditions. If he plays his course he will be in much better position to judge whether or not there is ground for the complaint of a member or official or whether the complainer was merely off his game on his last round.

Playing other courses will enable him to make comparisons with his own. Sometimes we are quite satisfied with ourselves until we begin to measure up to what someone else has accomplished and then we are forced to revise our ideas. But comparisons are not always odious; we may find that after all we have been doing quite as well as we thought, and to find this out should be helpful for it should stimulate us to greater efforts to improve upon our past successes.

I would not want to take all the joy out of a game of golf for the greenkeeper or ruin his score by insisting that he should be studying the course as he plays. I think I have heard somewhere that when one plays golf his mind should be on his game. However, I would suggest that there are times when the greenkeeper should play with the avowed purpose of studying the course in relation to his play. I am quite sure that if he does this he will discover possible changes which if made would improve the course and increase the pleasure of the members in playing it.

There may be some other ways of self education for the greenkeeper which I have not mentioned, but I believe I have suggested enough so that any greenkeeper who faithfully tries out all of them will not want for means of occupying his leisure hours for some time to come. I fully realize that many greenkeepers are probably making use of most of these methods at present. I do not want to add anything to the gloom which already engulfs us, but I will venture the guess that greenkeepers are going to be asked to make just as many bricks with less straw in the future as they have in the past when there was more straw with which to work.

The greenkeeper is going to have to be more efficient in the future than in the past. Granted that he has been doing his best in the past he is going to have to do better in the future. To do that he must know more about his job. He must make better utilization of the facilities furnished. He must be more alert to keep the club officials better informed as to the problems, without seeming to complain. Only to the extent to which he avails himself of these various means of education will he be able to meet the new demands which will be made upon him.

Greenkeepers Meet at Kingston

By PROFESSOR T. E. ODLAND

THE 4th Annual Greenkeepers field day was held at the Rhode Island State College and experiment station at Kingston, R. I., on May 22. The day was ideal and about 80 greenkeepers and other turf enthusiasts were present.

After registration the greenkeepers visited the turf experiments at the Experiment station under the guidance of T. E. Odland and H. F. A. North. The season has been favorable and the grass plats were in good condition. Various fertilizer tests, variety tests, bent grass strains from different clubs, bent grass for seed production and many other experiments and tests are under way.

From the grass plats the way led to the College dining hall where 81 were served lunch. After luncheon the visitors were extended greetings from the college by President Raymond G. Bressler. Director Gilbert of the Experiment station acted as chairman of the meeting and introduced a number of the greenkeepers and others present. The chief