

More About Turf Diseases

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AT THE very start of my article this month on turf diseases I wish to call particular attention of greenkeepers and other golf officials interested in the maintenance of fine turf—to the “Bulletin” recently released by the United State Golf Association Green Section.

This bulletin deals with “Turf Diseases and Their Control” and is edited by John Monteith, Jr., and Arnold S. Dahl. These men have presented a masterful contribution of the golf world. I sincerely hope that everyone interested in golf turf will read every word of it.

LOOK TO THE CLIPPINGS

MY SPECIAL remarks this month I wish to confine to the importance of watching the grass clippings as you mow your greens. You have heard the oft-told legend of the battle that was lost . . . but for a missing shoe on a horse. So, likewise may our battle against fungi and turf pests be lost if we fail to note the things which on first thought may seem very unimportant.

During the growing seasons, farmers watch closely the growth of their crops. Experience has shown them that their corn, wheat or rye should be advanced to a certain given point at a definite time of year. If it fails to develop to that point, they know quickly that something must be wrong with their crop.

So it may be with groundskeepers. Any expanse of fine turf under normal weather conditions produces a certain quantity of clippings each time it is mowed. That, figuratively speaking, is the crop. If, for any reason, the “crop” of grass clippings should fall off noticeably, there must be something

wrong with the grass and the groundskeeper should be concerned as is the farmer who notices a definite retarding of growth in his crop.

A decline in the amount of clippings may be due to a number of causes. But, invariably, it is a sure indication that something is wrong. The decrease in clippings may be due to weather conditions, cold nights, lack of moisture, or other causes due to local conditions which the groundskeeper can explain for himself. But, on the other hand, a decline of grass clippings often indicates the insidious presence of fungi. Unless the groundskeeper can definitely place the cause of the decrease in his clippings to some known cause, he better assume that fungi are doing their unseen work—and he should prepare at once to cope with the condition.

Experience has proved that much costly damage to turf can be avoided if the proper preventative measures are taken before the fungi get much of a start. In this respect the good groundskeeper is no different from a good doctor who recognizes that an early diagnosis is the all-important factor in the successful treatment of any disease. For this reason alone, it pays big dividends to “watch your grass clippings.”

BE CAREFUL OF DEADLY POISONS

IN CONCLUSION, let me offer this one word of caution. In your zeal to prevent the growth of fungi, do not attempt to clutter the soil with deadly poisons. It is true that you may destroy the harmful pests, but it is likewise true that you may harm also bacteria in the soil that are necessary for plant life.

My experience has proved that fungi grow faster on the grass blades because fungus is a lover of oxygen and oxygen is more prevalent on the blades of the grass than in the soil. Therefore, it is advisable to treat the grass leaves for fungi attacks rather than treat the soil.