

Care of the Green

In my preceding article I dwelt on the desirability of removing the worms from the soil and at the same time issued a note of warning to the greenkeeper against taking things easy now that he has got rid of his enemy. By their removal he has presented to his members a beautiful carpet of fine, clean, true, surface of turf on which it was a pleasure to putt. I have seen mistakes made time and again with quick and disastrous results, and this applies more so to young grass, than to older and stronger turf. The putting greens must of necessity be mown and also lightly rolled from time to time to keep the playing surface in good shape. Now with this continual work being carried out, without question it means that the surface will eventually become "caked" or bound up.

On soils of a heavy or clayey nature this state of affairs, will of course, take place much more rapidly. To combat this the greenkeeper must adopt some plan to remedy it, otherwise he will find that his turf will assuredly begin to go back and he may find himself in a worse position than before. Therefore to remedy this evil I find that a succession of light applications of sharp sand, applied from time to time will effect this purpose; care, however, must be exercised as to the number and amount put on.

I find that the best time to apply this dressing is in

CARE OF THE GREEN

the fall just before the growth stops. Apply a quantity, spread very lightly over the surface, choosing a fine dry sunny day. When spread the sand will soon become dry and powdery and it therefore will rub in much more quickly and go out of sight. If it is applied in this way no inconvenience will be given the members playing, and if one-half of the green is treated at a time no trouble will be given at all. Rub the sand well in with *the back* of an iron rake and afterwards brush all over. There is no need to rest the green when carrying out this work. Another reason I have for recommending the fall season for carrying out this work is, the frosts of the coming winter will of course open up the ground, therefore allowing the sand to percolate further down, therefore doing more good, as the lower it gets the better. These operations can, of course, be carried out in springtime as well, but I find the best results are got from the fall application. I have seen this also done during the summer, but I personally do not advocate this time of the year. When applying compost I find it always a good plan to mix a quantity of sand along with it. There is no nourishment in sand and it should only be used for building up and opening up the soil so that the plants get air to their roots. Another dressing beneficial for the same purpose is finely ground charcoal applied in the same way. I now come to another dressing and one I approach with great diffidence, as opinions greatly differ as to its use on putting greens, etc. It is asserted, per-

CARE OF THE GREEN

haps it may be correctly, that it encourages clover, but from my own personal observations I cannot say that it does, but of this I am certain, it does not in my own opinion breed it, that is to say, I have not yet seen clover appear after its application where there was no sign of it before using it.

No one has any use for clover in a putting green, especially where it appears in patches, as it makes putting very uncertain, as it is next to impossible to gauge the strength of the green and on newly seeded greens, on its first appearance, it should be removed at once. On the fairways it does not amount to so much and does no real harm perhaps. There is very little chance of the seed blowing into the putting greens, as owing to the continual mowing it never gets a chance to run to seed. After all is said and done I cannot truthfully say I am a friend of clover anywhere on a golf course, fairways or greens, and I am at war all the time with it. I have no use for it at all. Well, the dressing I am about to mention is lime. I am and always have been a great and firm believer in its use on turf. I honestly believe that if more lime were used the greenkeeper's duties would be made more easy and pleasant for him and his worries would be reduced very considerably.

Soils will at some time or another have a tendency to go sour especially on inland courses. In England I have seen on one of the best seaside links the soil, although of a sandy nature, go sour. The continual

CARE OF THE GREEN

work expended on it being the cause of this state of affairs. By the use of a liberal application of lime a transformation was very soon effected and the course pulled round to its former condition. As I have said, this state of affairs will take place much more quickly on soil of a heavy character and I would earnestly recommend all greenkeepers to be much more liberal in the use of lime than they have been in the past. I feel sure it will pay in the end and help them out of one of their difficulties. I have had some experience and I know it has always stood by me where this state of affairs had appeared. I would strongly advise all greenkeepers not to wait for this sourness to make its appearance, but to take time by the forelock and keep the soil always sweet and lime will, I am sure, help them out in this. In passing let me just mention the methods I employ when clover makes its appearance in a green.

Clover, I class as a weed, and it should be treated as one. In the case of newly sown down putting greens it is possible it may have been in the soil on which the green was built, as with the machinery the seedsmen have on hand nowadays it is almost impossible for the seeds to be imported with the mixtures of the different grasses with which the green had been sown down. However, clover has appeared somehow, first in small patches, perhaps in single plants. They should be removed at once by hand and this can easily be accomplished if proper care is taken. In the other case,

CARE OF THE GREEN

where in old turf it may abound in large quantities and hand weeding is an impossibility, the method I find to work best is this: As all greenkeepers know, clover dies down in the fall. Now just before all growth is gone, towards the end of September say, I take a sharp-toothed iron rake and start in and rake the clover up, doing this raking in every direction so that I get a hold of the runners. I then take a good sharp mower with a very thin plate, a half worn one for preference, set the mower as low as I possibly can and cut all the runners I can get a hold of. I repeat this as often as I think is necessary so as to get as many of the runners as possible. In this operation I may, perhaps, rake out some of the grass plants, but I expect this and have made arrangements to replace them. When I have finished I then rake the ground well up again, put in a little seed, top dress lightly and I am through. I do not mean to say I have killed out the enemy entirely, not by any means, but I have choked him so that what grass plants were left and which will still show vitality for some time to come until the very cold weather sets in and the seed I have put in has germinated and established itself, and both have taken the place of the clover, I shall then in the spring have grass instead of clover, which is still there but cannot assert itself owing to the thick turf, through which it cannot push its way.

In course of time if this treatment is carried out in a systematic way the greenkeeper will have no more

CARE OF THE GREEN

trouble from clover as he will undoubtedly kill it out eventually. So much for clover, but there is one more weed which it is very undesirable to have in the putting green (all weeds are), but this is one that I have seen sown along with grasses on golf courses and is one again I have no use for, namely, yarrow.

I put him in the same category as clover and make war on him at his first appearance in a putting green. I would suggest the self same treatment of him as I have given for clover. On a newly sown putting green especially if those two are allowed rope in a very short time they will kill out all the finer grasses and no amount of topdressing will bring the green back to its former excellent condition. Another good plan to follow when they make their appearance in a putting green is to give instruction to the workmen when mowing the green to put as much weight as possible on the mower when they come across those patches so that the knives get as low as possible, as the closer they are cut down the more chance the grass has to come through and keep them under.

I will now assume that the putting green is perfectly free from weeds and that the greenkeeper has seen to the dressing of sand and lime. He has, however, to keep feeding his grass the more so if he is continually mowing as he has to.

In a former article I pointed out the urgent necessity of seeing to this very important part of the greenkeeper's work and one which he must not neglect on

CARE OF THE GREEN

any account. In England it is possible to play the courses all the year round and where the worms have been removed the summer putting greens are never rested unless in the case of very bad weather. Owing to the very severe weather we have in this country in winter this is practically impossible, at least up in these latitudes, and the golf courses are for the most part closed until spring opens up. However, as long as it is possible some of the members generally make their way to the links if it is possible to play at all, and in spring they take the very first opportunity to make their acquaintance again. Owing to conditions it cannot truthfully be said it is golf they are playing but are merely out for the exercise. More harm can be done in one day (especially to young turf) than months of the greenkeeper's art and skill can make good again. However, the greenkeeper will have made provisions for this, and away back in the fall he has prepared temporary greens and trees to meet this contingency, and his summer greens and tees are being carefully rested until the weather opens up and he can let his members play on them once more without doing any damage whatsoever. In my next article I will endeavor to give a few hints as to the treatment of greens which have been laid up during the winter months.