

## Early Work on the Golf Course

In my preceding article I finished up with the warning against overrolling. No matter how much care and attention the greenkeeper may have bestowed on his putting greens in the preceding year to work them up to the very highest state of perfection before winter set in, if care is not exercised in the judicious use of the roller during the first few weeks in early spring, he may find that all his labor spent on the greens in the previous year may all have been wasted and his greens may very soon be in a worse condition than before. At no time of the year is it so important to keep the surface open as springtime. Spring growth is a tender growth and should be nursed accordingly. At other times of the year the greenkeeper might be able to afford to take chances, but at this season he cannot, and must not attempt to do so. If the grass plants are not properly attended to at this time the greenkeeper will most assuredly be up against it for the rest of the season. After the long and severe winter it is of course essential to take advantage of the first signs of spring weather to help on in some way and encourage the quick growth of the grass. To get a quick growth it is invariably the custom to apply some top-dressing, artificial manure, perhaps, to get a quick growth. This may be all very well and the results obtained from such methods appear very satisfactory.

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Springtime in this country is a short season, some years one may say we practically get none at all. However, there is a certain amount of growth and at the first opportunity the greenkeeper takes advantages of it. After spring comes summer, and very often dry, warm weather sets in right away. In England one can depend on spring weather, but in this country no chances can be taken. As I have said, the greenkeeper takes the opportunity when the first signs of spring weather appears to get busy topdressing so as to get the first and earliest growth.

To help on the growth of his grass he proceeds to topdress with some kind of fertilizer. This may be all very well and his labor may help on a quicker growth. With a short spring season, perhaps none at all, we may find ourselves all at once in dry, warm, summer weather,

Now the dressing the greenkeeper has so recently applied may have just started to perform its work and the tender grass plants will have benefitted a little from its application. However, dry, warm weather has set in and all at once owing to those conditions growth becomes checked to a certain extent. At this early period the nights are always cold, with perhaps a touch of frost in the air. Watering under such conditions would of course do more harm than good. The dressing applied to push on the growth would, under such conditions, fail to perform or carry out the full

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advantages the greenkeeper hoped to obtain from its application.

It may be asked that if topdressing cannot be applied in spring to get the very best results (as to the majority of people, this may appear to be the most feasible time to carry out this work), what season is the most suitable? In my opinion the early fall season is the one most suitable for the application of topdressing. To some it may seem strange to say this, but my own personal experience bears this out. I have tried it out every way but I confess to being partial to fall dressing. If applied in early fall there is more heat in the ground with the result that the topdressing acts more quickly. The grass plants are much more hardy than they would be in spring. With the continual mowing that has been necessary during the summer to keep the grass at the desired length for play, the plants must require some sort of food to strengthen them before the cold frosts of winter sets in. Therefore I favor topdressing with good rich dressing in fall, as against spring.

I think if the greenkeeper tried out this plan he would have less worry when spring came. In any case he would not require to topdress in the same drastic manner. Spring growth is of course slow, and a dressing applied then takes a long time to work in, whereas in fall, growth is much more stronger and the dressing disappears much more quickly and performs its duties more rapidly.

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Another point in regard to fall topdressing which is very greatly in its favor, that is, when the first sign of spring growth sets in the greens having been topdressed, will benefit by this right away, and full advantage will be obtained all round, and the greens will therefore have a chance to all come on at the same time, and a uniform and early growth of grass will result. Of course it is quite possible that conditions may warrant another topdressing in early spring but I am satisfied that a general dressing will not be necessary if they have been treated in early fall.

I find that a dressing of "Malt Sprouts" is very beneficial in early spring. I am personally a great believer in this topdressing and apply it when I think it is of benefit to sickly looking grass. A ton goes a long way, as it has to be applied very sparingly and care must be exercised to spread it on evenly, as if applied in a slipshod manner it will burn out the grass where put on too thickly.

Sheep manure (pulverized) is another good and beneficial dressing and should be applied in the same way as the malt sprouts. Should the greenkeeper, however, not have been able to topdress his greens in the fall he should take the first opportunity and push on the work of topdressing with good compost as fast as possible so as to get all advantage of the first spring growth. Should he think it necessary, a mixture of fine grasses should also be applied, but before proceeding with this part of the work it would be better and

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of more advantage to the green to spike roll it before sowing. A seed bed would be made for the seed and far better results obtained.

Those remarks also apply to tees. They are just as important as the greens, in fact everything connected with the maintenance of good turf on a golf course, whether greens, fairways or tees, require the greenkeepers most earnest attention and care as the one without the other will spoil the look of everything.

This is a good time to fill up all iron cuts on the fairway with soil and seed, especially if there has been play in the late fall. It used to be the fashion to fill these up with sand only and I have been told by greenkeepers who had charge of courses situated on heavy clay soil that by applying sand it helped to lighten it up. This may have been so to a certain extent, but perhaps they never stopped to think of how many years it would take for the members to cut divot marks in the whole of the fairways, so that a uniform dressing of sand would be applied all over. Fill up all divot cuts with soil and seed.

If the ground is heavy, and the club can afford it, apply sand all over to open it up. This means money, however, but it is well spent, if it could be done, and the club's finances could bear it. In regard to spring treatment of the grass when it has finally got going some greenkeepers let it get away, that is, let it grow without mowing.

The belief is that by so doing the plants are being

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strengthened thereby. I consider this a great mistake and is absolutely wrong. If a crop of hay is desired this treatment of course would be all right. To procure a carpet of turf for a golf course this procedure is all wrong, and I would advise the greenkeeper to keep his grass mown as short as possible at this time, as at all times, but at this time more especially. By so doing he is strengthening and hardening up his grass plants and at the same time building a much more closer and thicker bottom.

Therefore I would say mow when necessary and mow close. This is one sure way to build up good turf on a golf course.

In a former article I went into the question of rolling, but just let me add another word of warning against overrolling at this time. Keep the surface firm, but open and do not choke the young, tender plants. After the long winter in which everything has been allowed to look after itself the greenkeeper will find that its ravages has left its marks behind perhaps in washouts here and there especially on hilly and undulating ground, and more so on courses that have been seeded down in late years.

On courses so situated washouts very seldom occur, but where this state of affairs has taken place the greenkeeper has to set about and fill up and reseed. Now is the time to get busy on this work also. Bunkers, which in my opinion get far too much attention and kept in too good order, have to be seen to and got

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into shape for the opening of the links. I maintain that too much care and attention is sometimes bestowed on these very essential parts of the course, and money thus spent and greater advantage on other work in the upkeep of the more important parts of the course, namely, fairways, greens and tees. I admit it is very annoying if one gets into some one's heelmark who has had the misfortune to have made the acquaintance of the bunker previous to your visit. Be this as it may, the fact remains that a bunker is a part of the course to be avoided, and has been placed there to punish bad play, if this is so, why waste time and money to have it nicely raked and combed out every day and kept just so? It all looks very pretty, I admit, but would it not be more like real golf to have it look more as it should look, natural and rough? I do not mean to have them in any way unfair to the player. I only mean that in my opinion they look too artificial and pretty when raked every day, as they commonly are. I merely bring up this point at this time, as it is certain that it will be amongst the first questions the greenkeeper gets asked when he is called before those higher up—are the bunkers all in good order as well as the turf. Spend money on the turf, especially at this time, put all possible labor on the fairways, tees and greens to get them into shape. These are the main essentials and the ones most important.