

CHAPTER XIV

TURFING

Turf—Cumberland Turf—Down, Heath or Moorland Turf—Meadow Turf—Preparing Turf—How to Lay Turf—Conditioning Turf.

Turf

The superiority of Turf over Seed is more apparent than real, and the only advantage it does possess can be summed up by the use of one word—time.

If time is a greater consideration than expense, use turf ; but do not run away with the idea that it can be obtained free from weeds, or that it cannot fail, or that it requires less attention than seed.

Turf free from weeds does not exist commercially ; it can die, and will if laid in the Spring and dry weather sets in, unless it is freely watered, and if it dies the loss is no mean one, and, as far as attention is concerned, it requires exactly the same as a sown lawn.

Turf can roughly be divided into three categories—Cumberland or Marsh ; Down, Heath or Moorland ; and Meadow Turf.

Cumberland Turf

Cumberland Turf is undoubtedly the best available, but unfortunately supplies are very limited, and its cost together with the railway charges makes its use very expensive indeed. This perhaps will be better realised when it is known that a square yard of turf cut $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick weighs approximately 112 lb., or, say, 40 tons for sufficient to cover a full-sized tennis court, containing 800 square yards.

Cumberland Turf has not got the strength it is reputed to have and cannot stand up to the wear and tear of a vigorous game such as Tournament Tennis, as was proved at Wimbledon, where the centre and No. 2 courts were relaid with turf produced from Carters Silloth Turf Mixture of Grass Seeds, just as soon as it could be grown.

As a matter of fact it is composed of soft, tender grasses, and it is not an uncommon sight to see fids cut out of Bowling Greens by the woods in the early autumn, and for this reason many greens are closed earlier than they would be if it was strong enough to stand the play at this time of the year.

Those who have only seen the turf after it has been worked up, marvel at its wonderful texture and freedom from weeds, and do not understand that it arrives from the marshes in a rough, cattle-grazed, dingy state, and contains all too many weeds, the chief being *Plantago coronopus* or buckshorn plantain, *Plantago maritima* or sea plantain, *Armeria maritima*, sea pink or thrift, and a certain amount of Trefoil or clover.

This brings me to a point, and one which should be remembered, and that is, a turfed lawn is by no means finished or complete when the turf is laid, it is still only in the process of making, and the ultimate result depends entirely on the care in which it is worked up, but this will be referred to later.

Down, Heath or Moorland Turf

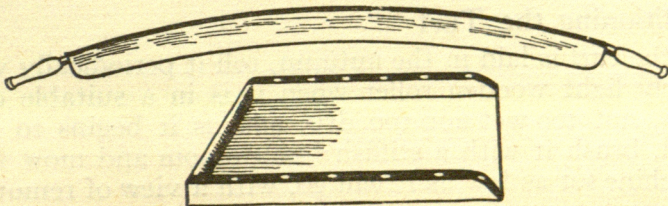
This can sometimes be obtained comparable almost to Cumberland Marsh Turf, but here local knowledge comes into play. Personally I do not know of any large areas or anyone who handles it commercially.

Meadow Turf

Meadow Turf is generally of very inferior quality, full of weeds, coarse grasses and dormant weed seeds, but with time and proper treatment it can be worked up and improved out of all recognition.

Preparing Turf

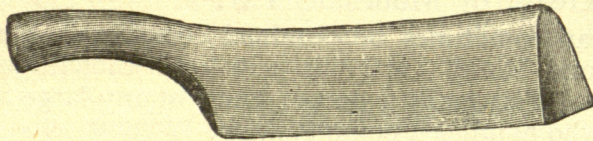
To get the best results, turf should be cut 12 by 12 by 2 in., and, if possible, trimmed in a gauge box (see Supplement) to a thickness of 1½ in.



If this is done, it can be laid on a firm, true surface with dead accuracy without packing. If, however, it is cut 3 ft. by 12 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. and rolled, it will require very careful packing if anything approaching a level finish is to be obtained. It does not matter what class of turf is used, it will certainly contain weeds in more or less abundance, and as it is much easier to remove them before it is laid than afterwards, each sod should be placed on a rough bench, brushed and carefully picked over before it is laid. By this means all the visible weeds can be removed, but those produced by dormant seeds and root stocks will naturally have to be dealt with later.

How to Lay Turf

Work from one end, slightly disturb the surface, which must be quite firm and true, to a depth not exceeding $\frac{1}{4}$ in., place the turf in position, packing if necessary with sifted soil, and gently beat it down with a turf mallet—see Supplement.



It is a mistake to beat the turf heavily, particularly if the soil is of a tenacious nature, as it will harden the under side of the turf and the surface of the ground, and so make it difficult for the roots to penetrate. Dress the turf with finely sifted soil mixed with a little grass seed at the rate of about 4 lb. of seed to a barrow-load of soil, and work the same well into the turf and cracks between the turf with the back of a wooden rake, or a birch broom.

Conditioning the Turf

If the turf is laid in the autumn, roll it periodically with a fairly light wooden roller when it is in a suitable condition, not too wet nor too dry, and as it begins to pull round, brush it with a stiffish birch broom and mow with a machine set as low as it will go, with a view of removing

all the old foliage as soon as possible. Should the soil contain worms in any quantity, they should be destroyed at the earliest possible moment. If laid in the spring treat as above, and in both cases carefully weed the turf, and work it up into playing condition by dressing it every second or third week with quarter-dressings, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. to the square yard, of No. 1 Fertiliser and soil or compost well mixed together, and finely sifted, provided that the weather is open and showery, or water is available (see Chapter XVII).

As the turf develops use a heavier roller up to 6 ft. wide and 10 to 20 cwt. in weight, according to its width and the purpose for which the lawn is required, drawing it by hand alternately across the length and width of the ground. As separate chapters are devoted to rollers and rolling, it is not necessary to go deeper into the subject at present.