

THE BULL SHEET, official publication of THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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M.A.G.C.S. OCTOBER EDUCATIONAL REPORT

The topic "Preparing Your Course For Winter" was thoroughly discussed by a panel of Golf Course Superintendents at the October meeting.

The distinguished panel members, Ray Gerber, Peter Bild, Ed Wollenberg, Mike Bavier, and John West, all gave a report covering the preparation of their courses for the winter months. Then the session was opened to the audience for questions and discussion.

Some very important points and observations brought out by the panel were:

1. Make last fertilizer application no later than late September to allow turf to harden off for winter.
2. Aerifying, spiking, verti-cutting, should be done in early fall so holes or slits will heal over before winter sets in.
3. Before draining irrigation system for winter, water all turf well.
4. While irrigation lines are still under pressure, crack all drain valves to see if they are functioning, before draining system.
5. Topdressing applied very late in fall will help to protect turf from winter damage.
6. Spray for snowmold as late as possible so a late fall rain will not wash it off.
7. If placing straw, brush or plastic on greens, for winter protection, apply a fungicide first. Then follow up with brush or straw after the ground is thoroughly frozen.

Other questions and observations raised by the audience were:

1. Be sure potassium levels are adequate in turf, before going into winter.
2. Anti-Desiccant materials did not seem to prove helpful in combating winter desiccation in 1969.
3. Can irrigation systems be installed below the frost line so they can be activated during winter dry spells?

The general feeling of the panelists and the audience were that, winter desiccation seems to be more of a problem now than in years past. It appears that thatched turf suffers desiccation the most.

Could our stepped up fertilizer programs to combat turf wear from heavy play, and heavy and continuous play not allowing us enough time to apply proper cultural practices, be the partial cause of our winter problems?

Submitted by Ted Sokolis

The President's Message

For the past year it has been my privilege to write the President's Message. In this last message which will appear on about the eve of my termination in this office, I would like to express my gratitude to the board that has worked with me.

Also the many members, in one way or another, who expressed their appreciation for what I have written that greatly encouraged me to continue to write a message every month. It was these pleasant comments that made this past year one I will always remember, and overshadow the things I would like to forget.

Looking back on the past year, I sometimes wonder how I had the courage to accept the presidency — being in a position to know my capabilities better than anyone else. But then I guess whatever you do in this world takes courage. No matter what course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you you are wrong. And there are always difficulties arising which tempt you into believing that the critics may be right.

To decide upon a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage. And there is no important decision or day of life that doesn't require some sort of courage. It takes courage to be different, to side with someone who is unfairly abused, or to befriend someone who is a popular disfavor, or to speak out in favor of an unpopular proposal. But then anyone who stands for anything, who says anything, who does anything that amounts to much, must face the critics — and that requires courage. Life itself with every important decision, requires courage.

I am really not sure that I have any courage at all, and would like to believe that because I like people, I have been accepted by you.. And because of our vocation and professional ability, we owe each other much. Even if for little else, we owe something to each other for the privilege of companionship. Oh, I know we have caused problems for each other at times. But virtually all people disappoint us at times (as we even disappoint ourselves.) But despite faults and imperfections all of us need each other. For better or for worse, constructively or otherwise, we all play our part. And in all this give and take, this appreciation and disappointment, what do we look for?

Speaking for myself, I am concerned about the importance of "balance". Balance for the association of which you and I are a part. I think this viewpoint is seldom if ever stressed enough. Nonetheless, balance is needed.

Look into the region of nature and you will see this clearly. There must be balance between rainfall and sunshine if turf is to grow and thrive. By introducing a new species in order to control other species, we have occasionally found ourselves in a state worse than the first. In the soil there must be a balance between alkaline and acid — tipping the scales in either direction could prove to be unhealthy.

Balance. Let's not forget it. There may be something else you have forgotten to put on the scales. I am sure it is worth a second look.

And now, if you would remember with any kindness the man who wrote this column for the past year, remember he was very concerned about the continued success for all of you and the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

Ed Wollenberg, President

WINTER FEEDING OF LAWNS

by Robert W. Schery
Director, The Lawn Institute

Today we are experiencing something of a fad with winter survival lawn fertilizers now being made by several lawn product suppliers. These are excellent fertilizers but the name implies that survival of the lawn through winter is dependent upon a particular formulation of nutrients which makes the lawn more tolerant of cold. The familiar varieties of Kentucky bluegrass, fine fescue and bentgrass are quite hardy without this, however, except possibly in Alaska and the northernmost reaches of the Plains States. However, research does indicate that some of the southern grasses can be made slightly more resistant to cold by increasing their regimen of potassium but, even then, the added tolerance is a degree or two and is usually overshadowed by the wild fluctuations winter weather brings.

This is not to say that there won't be some difference in cold tolerance between kinds of grass and between varieties of them. At the Lawn Institute we have experienced winter demise of one bluegrass introduced from the eastern Mediterranean but never loss, due to cold, of any of the conventional domestic and north European varieties. The same is true of the fine fescues and bentgrasses such as Highland or Penncross, the other main cool season lawn species. It is primarily for these grasses that the special winter fertilizers are advocated, since hardiness with southern grasses is so much more related to climatic vagaries than a fertilization program.

Research relating winter performance of lawngrasses to fertilization has received some special emphasis at both Michigan State University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The conclusions are not entirely in agreement, explainable largely by the climatic differences in the two states. I grew up in a border state, Missouri, and can quite agree with the Virginia conclusions for the southern portion of the bluegrass belt. Without getting involved in the details and qualifications, the Virginia position is basically one of generous high-nitrogen fertilization in autumn but light feeding in warm weather.

It is felt that nitrogen, as the chief growth-promoting nutrient for grasses, is best utilized at colder times of

the year when accrual of food, through photosynthesis, exceeds its exhaustion, through respiration and forced growth. It is recognized that for cool-season grasses, food-production tails off as temperature gets much above 80° while food use intensifies, thus creating a metabolic deficit. There is no evidence that in this climate familiar lawngrasses are any more likely to be lost in winter when fertilized heavily rather than lightly with nitrogen.

Dr. Beard, in Michigan, has run elaborate experiments in cold chambers, demonstrating certain differences between grasses in tolerance of cold which vary somewhat with ice cover, slush and so on. High-light and Pennlawn varieties of fine fescue have winterkilled significantly less in northern Michigan than Common and Olds, for example, and bentgrass has been more durable than annual bluegrass.

In lawns, however, all grasses survive well at the usual soil temperatures. Nevertheless, the researchers do seem to feel that there is some advantage in not having nitrogen disproportionately high vis-a-vis phosphorus and particularly potassium, when readying a turf for winter. Dr. Gilbert at North Carolina finds this to be the case at the northern limits of the bermudagrass range, also. It is not necessarily a question of resistance to cold in the North but a multiplicity of factors. Studies by Dr. Goss in western Washington, a much milder climate than Michigan, show that winter diseases may have considerable influence upon turf quality and that higher proportions of potassium may prove helpful. Balanced fertility seems to be more the need than growth stimulation.

Obviously, the usefulness of special winter fertilizers depends upon many factors. Perhaps, the situation can best be summed up by noting that balanced fertility is advantageous so far as the general tone of a lawn is concerned and, that depending upon local soils, climate and amount of nitrogen previously used there can be some balancing advantages for winter-fertilizers containing increased proportions of phosphorus and potassium. They are seldom critical for survival of the proven bluegrasses, fescues and bentgrasses, however, and, indeed, towards the southern limits of the bluegrass belt might be as appropriately used in summer as in winter.

In the original 48 states one hardly need fear use of the familiar high-nitrogen fertilizers in autumn. Rather, I would recommend generous fertilization in September and October, for bluegrass, fescue and bentgrass lawns with either a conventional or a winter formulation (this latter especially where nitrogen has been used alone previously). Certainly color and good looks are enhanced in autumn and through winter by seeing that the lawn has ample nitrogen for all its purposes.

At this particular season, of course, we are reaping the benefits, or lack thereof, of what we did last fall. More important, now, we should turn our attention to either winter feeding for early spring benefit or early spring feeding for the same purpose.

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IN APPRECIATION

I would like to thank Mr. Lee Record, Mr. Stan Rachesky and Mr. Ed Wollenberg for their monthly columns, along with many others who contributed in 1969.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all members and their families of the MAGCS.

Editor, Dick Trevarthan