

Bentgrass in Retrospect

by Roger A. Stewart, Jr., CGCS

In the past seven or eight years we have all heard about fairway renovation to Creeping Bentgrass. Riverside Golf Club was one of the first clubs in the Chicago area to undergo this process and I thought this might be a good time to look back on what we did and where we are now.

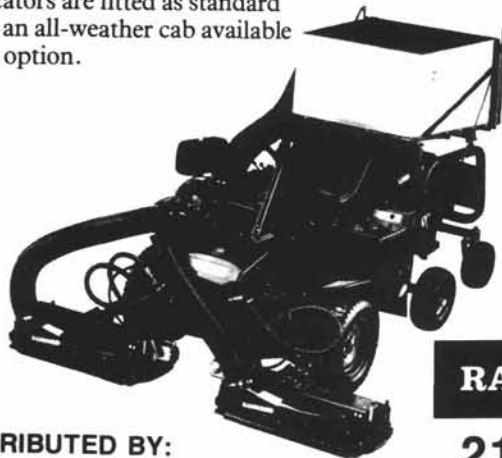
In August of 1982 we began a three year program of bentgrass conversion. The positive effects of what we did are numerous but I limit my remarks to a few. Most noticeable is the reduced irrigation requirement for bentgrass as opposed to **Poa annua**. Basically, we went from a quagmire in July and August, to a firm playing surface year round. An indication of this is that we have only restricted carts from fairway use three times in the last three years. This is a welcome relief to members who were used to coming out on 90°+ days and not knowing if they were going to make it around if carts were restricted. We have experienced little or no damage from carts traversing wilted areas. Our expectations as to the durability of Creeping Bentgrass have been surpassed many times over. Before renovation, our budget for Pythium control alone was over \$12,000.00. Now we spend between \$4,000.00 and \$6,000.00 for the control of that same problem. Our chemical budget hasn't gone up in the last five years. We have also found that we must spend much less time babysitting fairway turf during hot weather and therefore can use that time more productively in the management of our predominantly **Poa annua** greens. An unexpected benefit has been the boost in morale on my crew in July and August because of better turf with less work.

All of this didn't take place without some problems. I knew that the management techniques used after renovation were the real key to the success of the program. We knew we had to reduce our irrigation and stress the **Poa annua** in order to maintain predominantly bentgrass turf. We probably took this principle to the extreme initially, which caused a great deal of consternation amongst my members and my committee. Words like concrete, asphalt, desert, dust bowl began to show up in conversation around the club more often than I liked. I suppose my credibility slipped a little in their mind during those early days in the renovation process. However when I saw the bentgrass respond remarkably to our infrequent but heavy irrigation (3 hours of irrigation on 10-14 days intervals), I knew my convictions were strong and with time my members would see the benefits as well. The question was would they wait long enough? Thankfully, they did. We started out each spring after renovation with about 50% bentgrass, and then the next year it increased to 60% to 70%, and then to about 70% to 80% where it seems to have leveled off. This is a very manageable situation now. This year, one of the hottest and driest on record, the fairways really shine. If we had not done this renovation, the **Poa** would be gone and the quagmire would be back. Yes we have had to water a little more this year, (3 hours of irrigation every 6-10 days) and we do hand water a few dry spots, but we have grass that is alive and providing an excellent playing surface. We have not solved the divot regeneration problem caused by less irrigation but we're still trying. This is a minor irritation for members who ride the fairways every day. We still "greensaire" our fairways, and we use growth regulators,

(continued on page 20)

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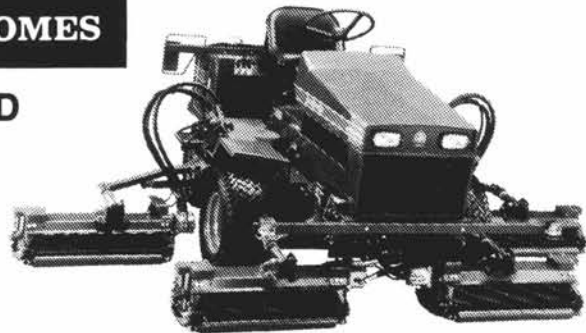
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BENTGRASS IN RETROSPECT (cont. from page 19) and we use lightweight mowers and less nitrogen fertilizer, all of which have a necessary place in our management plan.

I guess I can say the program was very successful for us. I have not heard of too many instances where this procedure was a failure. However, the greatest successes have been where a solid bentgrass management plan has been followed after renovation. I learned much more than what is written here, but most importantly, I learned the old axiom of "follow your convictions" pays off.

Now all I have to do is figure a fool proof way to keep *Poa annua* out of putting greens!

6th Annual Turf Field Day Hubbard, Oregon

I attended the 6th Annual Turf Field Day this past June 16th at Hubbard, Oregon, put on by Turf Seed, Inc. and Pure Seed Testing, Inc., sponsored by Bill Rose and Dr. Bill Meyer.

I reviewed Fred Opperman's **Bull Sheet** article in the August issue last year and he did an excellent job of taking pictures and explaining what is involved in growing certified seed and the steps that have to be followed in growing Penncross bent grass, and other aspects of the seed production and cleaning process.


This year the research farm has been expanded to 110 acres to accommodate many new varieties being grown and evaluated. Walter Fuchs was the only other local person attending from this area. Tom Voigt and Jean Haley, from the University of Illinois, were there, and mentioned their trip at the Turf Field Day at Urbana in July, and said they really enjoyed it. Warren Bidwell represented the Tee-2-Green Corporation.

I feel certain that Turf Seed and Pure Seed will be coming up with new varieties of fescues, perennial ryes, and blue grasses, that are being tested nationally at this time. With the good bents of Penncross, Penneagle and Penn Links proving themselves, it does not seem likely to have new varieties at this time, but there is still more research being done.

Green Making in the 1600's

The following is a quote from **Way to Get Wealth** by Gervase Markham published in 1613.

"To fit a place for this manner of greene plot, it is requisite that it may be cleansed from all manner of stones and weedes, not so much as the rootes left undestroyed, and for the better accomplishing hereof, there must boiling water be poured upon such endes of rootes as staying behind in the ground cannot be well pulled up, and afterwards the floor must be beaten and troden down mightily, then after this there must be cast great quantity and store of turfes of earth full of greene grasse, the bare earthe part of them being turned and laid upward, and afterward danced upon with the feete, and the beater or paving beetle lightly passing over them, in such sort that within a short time after, the grasse may begin to peepe up and put forth small haire."



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