

# Do-It-Yourself for Avid Golfers

Once upon a time, in the carefree days before USGA specifications, in an era when the typical home lot was bigger than a postage stamp, the nation's golfers salivated at the prospect of backyard putting greens.

Or did they? You might surmise as much from the 1966 *Golf Digest* article, "How to Build Your Own Putting Green." Consider it the *Reader's Digest* version of *Putting Green Construction for Dummies*. "Today's do-it-yourself homeowner can construct a private green at a minimum cost and effort," advises Dr. Gene C. Nutter. He goes on: "Naturally, the size of the green depends on the available area. Most backyards would accommodate a green of about 1,000 square feet, or about 35 feet in diameter."

Dr. Nutter then takes his readers through a step-by-step approach to building a green. Remove the topsoil, he says, then address drainage issues. "If the subsoil is, for instance, hard clay, there are two methods which will provide good drainage. One is to install four-inch farm tile about 15 or 20 feet apart in gravel-filled trenches in the subsoil, with the pieces not quite butted together . . . A simpler but not so effective method would be to lay a six-inch layer of gravel or cinders over the subsoil, then add an eight-inch layer of coarse sand and finally, an eight-inch layer of topsoil on top of this."

Preparing the seedbed comes next. Dr. Nutter recommends a preparation of three cubic yards of well-rotten manure or commercial humus, or two bales of peat moss; then two cubic yards of coarse sand (unless the topsoil is very sandy). "To this, add 30 pounds of super-phosphate and an insecticide like dieldrin or heptachlor." Fifty pounds of lime should be figured in if the soil is acidic, says Dr. Nutter.

"Mix all of the soil materials with the topsoil . . . This could be done by hand, using a shovel, or with a roto-tiller, or a disc attached to a garden tractor . . . Do not leave materials in layers," Dr. Nutter cautions.

Planting is next, and Dr. Nutter all but mandates bentgrass for Northern areas, adding, "It is important to find out the exact strain best suitable for your area. Check this with a local golf course superintendent." Seaside, Penncross, Highland and Astoria all get the nod from Dr. Nutter.

1. Remove top-soil



2. Spread fertilizers



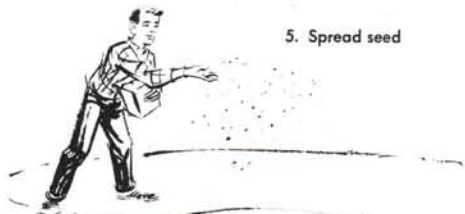
3. Mix all materials with soil



4. Roll until firm



5. Spread seed




6. Keep moist



Post-planting care includes keeping the seed moist until it germinates. Writes the esteemed professor, "When the grass has reached a height of one inch, it should be mowed to one-half inch with a putting green mower. The grass should be cut at the one-half inch height for four weeks, then gradually lowered to one-quarter inch." (Wonder how this green would fare with the Stimpmeter?) "Usually the greens must be cut three times a week during the growing season."

In terms of maintenance, Dr. Nutter suggests fertilizing monthly, topdressing with screened loam twice per season, periodical aerating, application of fungicides and weed removal. "The best idea would be to see a local golf course superintendent for a definite maintenance program. He could tell you exactly what to do." (Thanks for the vote of confidence, Dr. Nutter!)

Finally, Dr. Nutter addresses the price tag for this little luxury. "About \$300" is Dr. Nutter's ballpark figure, with the disclaimer that this figure "does not include the costs for a putting green mower, putting cups, a hole-cutter, irrigation hose and sprinklers." How that figure adjusts for inflation is uncertain. Still, consider what that same 1,000-square-foot green would run you today: a whopping \$5,000 to \$7,000 (using current USGA specifications, \$5-\$7 per square foot)! 

### Budget for 1,000-square-foot putting green

Construction materials	High	Low
2 bales peat moss	\$12.00	\$ 9.50
2 yards sand	10.00	8.00
30 lbs. superphosphate	4.00	3.00
50 lbs. ground limestone*	1.50	1.00
25 lbs. 5-10-10 or similar fertilizer	2.00	1.00
25 yards top-soil	80.00	70.00
3 lbs. bentgrass seed**	4.50	3.00
Roto-tiller rental (by hour)	5.00	2.50
Labor for stripping of top-soil (could be done by owner)	75.00	25.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$194.00</b>	<b>\$123.00</b>

Other materials	High	Low
Putting green mower***	\$200.00	\$100.00
Putting cups (each)	10.00	5.00
Hole cutter	15.00	8.00
Hose and sprinkler	25.00	15.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$250.00</b>	<b>\$128.00</b>

\*Test soil to see if needed.

\*\*If in South, use 5 lbs. Bermuda seed (usually 75¢-\$1.00 a lb.), re-seed each October with 50 lbs. ryegrass (about 10¢ per pound) if greens are to be used in winter.

\*\*\*New mowers cost about upwards of \$500.00, but used ones are often available from golf course superintendents or golf course supply firms.



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24356 HARVEST HILLS ROAD • FRANKFORT, IL 60423

800-732-9401 • Fax: 815-469-8248