

# A. B. C. Reasoning Leads to Good Greens

By "DR. X"

OUR course now is two years old, this autumn concluding the first season of play. Construction, planting, and development work took up all of the first year.

We have a few fairways that require some more seeding as washouts and failure of seed to catch in several spots left us with the apparently unavoidable barren places. But, generally, our 60% blue grass and 40% red top, with a little rye in it, gave us

There is an absence of deep technicalities in this article for the reason that its author acknowledges that he has much to learn about the chemistry of greenkeeping, depending on his greenkeeper for the handling of this detail of course conditioning.

Upon being burdened with responsibility for the greens at his club he proceeded to work according to the interesting theory that there were many basic parallels between grass and humans in the promotion and preservation of health.

satisfactory fairways. Our greens, however, are among the prize greens of our section of the country where more than a hundred of first class greenkeepers and many experienced greens chairmen are at work and have at their command some substantial greens budgets.

I think that probably our experience may contain some details that will promote, perhaps guide, research and practice along what seem to me to be safe.

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I believe patients treated with minimum amount of drugs recover quicker and with fewer chances of setbacks. On the treatment of both humans and grasses, opinions differ greatly, but I resolved to base our greens practice on the homeopathic basis and attempted to handle grass life on the same general lines as would be followed with human life. Our ideas and practices in some respects have been viewed with amazement and at times have been condemned, but thus far they have worked out nicely.

At the base of our policy is protection against over-stimulation. Another point we emphasize is to get at the roots of the grass instead of hoping that watering and absorption through the blades of the grass would eventually bring the good to the roots.

## No Compost Pile

Greenkeepers who come out to inspect our greens are shocked by the absence of a compost pile at our course. They forecast dire results from the weakening of our grass by the necessary frequent cuttings and apparently no replacement of nutritive material. The top dressing that we do—and we do plenty of it—is with black earth that fortunately is present in abundance at our course. Varying amounts of

sand are mixed with this black earth, but only every few times do we mix in any additional chemical matter. In the hot weather we use practically no sand in the top dressing and thus keep our grass roots moist. The last dressing of the last year contained a large amount of sand to keep the greens from freezing and our success was such that we will repeat the operation this year.

One practice that we follow religiously is to see that the roots are aerated. In our supply of maintenance equipment there are a dozen pitchforks that have the tines cut off to about half the usual length, and resharpened. We dig these into the greens at spots that look a little off, wiggle the forks back and forth to get air to the grass roots and find that it helps the grass without interfering with the trueness of the putting surface. Several times I have noticed that this treatment worked on what appeared to be the start of brown patch. The more I see and hear of brown patch, the more I am inclined to think that many greenkeepers and greens chairmen get frightened and incorrectly diagnose grass that is resting for a time as grass that has been attacked by brown patch.

My theory with this forking of the

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greens is that the air will supply sufficient nitrogen to the grass if it is allowed to get at the roots.

No one can pay higher tribute to the service of chemistry to greenkeeping than I, no matter how extensive their experience has been as compared to mine, but to my way of thinking the use of chemical treatment of greens in most cases is on the wrong basis. Something goes wrong with the greens. There is loud complaint at the club, and the greenkeeper, poor devil, must rush frantically in search of a quick cure and take desperate chances with the normal hardness of his grass. A good part of the time the operation results in too much of a good thing, the grass is over-stimulated, and, like the human body, finally depends on a continuous application of this stimulating element rather than on normal functioning. The outcome is that the roots become incapable of getting nourishment in the correct manner from the soil and an expensive penalty is paid for the haste. All of us have seen greens that are apparently wonderful the first year, as the result of forcing the growth, but that show marked deterioration the second and fol-

lowing years. The parallel is that of a man who takes cathartics so habitually that chronic constipation develops and at last the undertaker carries him off.

A normal, balanced ration supplied regularly, instead of a "shot" of stimulant is the proper idea for man or green, and the only sound reason for a variation from that policy is sickness.

#### Conditioning of Greens

Our greens maintenance operations are based on the policy that we want grass, not runners. We top-dress the minute there is evidence of any pronounced grain when the hand is rubbed back and forth briskly over the green.

We top-dress with fine dirt and rub it in with a MacGregor brush, first in one direction and then in the opposite direction. Then we water with a fine mist from several sprinklers so the top-dressing is sure to get to the roots evenly. When we make any application of crystalline chemicals we water well and keep play off the green for 24 hours. We adopted this policy because we noticed that much use of the green shortly after chemical application would prevent dissolving

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of the chemical application and its penetration to the roots of the grass. The result was that the chemical would stay on the surface and cause burning that would require several days for healing.

Before we mow we brush our greens in opposite directions with a MacGregor brush, until the runners are brought up and the green is shaggy. Then we mow. We have found that our method has given us greens that do not tear when a hard pitch shot falls on them. The bottom of the spot where the ball lit is covered with grass instead of being an exposed surface as is found on many greens.

### Worms and Birds

We have not been bothered much by worms, and attribute our good fortune in this respect to the presence of thousands of hungry birds as members of our green-keeping staff. We are doing all that we possibly can to encourage them for we have seen enough of other course damage wrought by worm casts to realize the

value of birds. I lately have been developing the suspicion that much of the worm trouble experienced by some clubs has its origin in the compost applied to the greens. Recalling where I used to dig for fishworms when I was a boy, leads me to the "hunch" that compost put on greens may contain the seed for a bumper crop of worms.

### No Bragging

This narrative of my experiences and operations is set down not as gospel, for despite the present excellence of the results there may be something turn out wrong. But as I went into green chairmanship on a sort of a "no mother to guide her" basis and worked out salvation in what seemed to be the most natural manner, it occurred to me that others to be elected to this position might get some advice and hope from my experience. I'm not boasting yet that I am one of the masterminds of greenkeeping, and willingly

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give the greater part of the credit for our results to our greenkeeper. Many is the time that we have sat on the edge of a green until darkness fell and smoked and compared ideas on what we thought our course needed.

## My Schedule for Fall Work

By BOB DUGUID  
Evanston Golf Club

IN discussing fall work on a golf course a great deal must be said which is so familiar as to seem unnecessary of mention, but reminders are not without value, so it is desirable to include a number of these well known details that these few remarks will fulfill their purpose.

A considerable amount of work can be done in the fall that may have been carried from last spring.

Top-dressing fairways should be done at this time. Seeding without giving nourishment is a useless expense, as fairways need nourishment frequently, the same as greens.

Drainage is an important factor in the maintenance of a golf course where good

turf is needed and now is a good time to get busy with drainage problems.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have room indoors can busy ourselves hauling in sod, and getting our compost ready for next spring, preparing it in the proportions required.

### Handling the Flowers

Those of us who have the pleasure of growing flowers ought to get our cannas, gladioli and dahlias dug up. Dry and store them until the following spring.

The perennials will require a slight mulching.

The land occupied by the annuals should be dug and bulbs of tulips, hyacinths and daffodils planted in their place. These will remain buried without signs of life until May when they will quickly shoot through and give a gorgeous display.

Planting shrubbery and trees where needed can be done now. It should be the business of every club to include some fixed annual sum in its budget to finance a landscape plan to beautify its course from year to year.

Some fall pruning can be done now, and the larger trees need attention, remove all dead limbs and cement up all crevices.

Just picture a golf course of over 9000 holes! Shoot 36 holes every day and you'd be the best part of a year making the round. When you had finished, the pedometer would read 2045 miles even if you stayed squarely in the middle of the fairway the whole trip.

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