

How We Learn to Be Better GREENKEEPERS at the Amherst School



By WILLIE OGG

Professional, Worcester (Mass.) Country Club

I THINK I have been in the golf game long enough, both in the pro end and in the practical end of greenkeeping to accurately judge for myself whether this ten weeks' course I am taking here at the Massachusetts Agricultural college at Amherst is to my advantage or not.

I was influenced to take this course partly because I consider Prof. L. S. Dickinson, who gives us most of our instruction on grasses, grass seed, implements, managerial problems and cost keeping and analysis, the most able man in this line I have ever met and partly because of the present day insistence of the average club membership for perfection in the greenkeepers' art I felt that if I did not learn anything of value that I would be just as well off as before and if I did find knowledge I would finish the course a much better man.

To state that I am finding knowledge is putting it rather mildly. I am amazed really at getting by with the little practical knowledge I had when consideration is taken of the fact that the average greenkeeper knows little of motors, water systems, landscape gardening and the seed game.

We are taught about motors by lectures and actual work on tractors and autos and power driven lawn mowers. We get into our overalls and find out in a practical manner by doing the job ourselves.

The proper method of installing water systems is taught us. This includes the operation of the different types of water

pumps, the loss of pressure by pipe friction and elevations and the proper size pipe to use to assure a given pressure at the greens.

Landscape gardening is included in the course. By this we get an insight into the laying out and planting of the grounds surrounding the clubhouse, how to do grading work to conform to the surrounding country and the laying out of roads and paths and the planting of trees to conform to the landscape. We do this work mostly by making models in sand.

Educated As Buyers

We are taught how to judge golf course equipment, more especially mowers and their upkeep, what a mower or cutting unit for the fairways should do and the proper method of handling same. A thorough study is made of the other equipment used on golf courses, taking in the whole line necessary to greenkeeping.

Drainage is covered in this course. We are taught the use of the level and how to set ditch grades. Special problems are worked out and we are shown how to overcome the common problems encountered in golf courses.

We are making a very intensive study of grasses and grass seed, confined principally to those commonly used on golf courses. We study the germination of the seeds, how to identify them, how to detect impurities and weed seeds and the method of cleaning the seed. We are shown how to identify the various grasses,

using the grasses grown in the hothouse for the tests, the value of the different grasses in different parts of the country, the conditions under which they thrive best, whether they stand short cutting or not and the soils and fertilizers best adapted to them.

Soils and fertilizers are analyzed and gone into in a very thorough manner. We are taught the chemical reaction of soils to the various chemicals, dependent on the soil conditions, and their relation to the various grasses and diseases of the turf. The diseases common to greens, such as brown patch, are shown to us. The disease germs are bred and inoculated in the grasses so that we can see for ourselves how they destroy the cells of the grass leaf. This can be plainly seen with a powerful microscope, also the effect the various chemicals have on them.

We get the business side of greenkeeping by a study of the managerial problems and cost keeping and analysis which, boiled down, means getting a dollar's worth for a dollar.

Perhaps it may occur to some who may read this that it is not possible to acquire all this knowledge in ten weeks; if so, we would finish this course as qualified motor mechanics, water engineers, landscape gardeners, etc. With them I would agree, but I will maintain that enough knowledge can be gained in this course, providing one has practical knowledge of greenkeeping, to make oneself a very valuable man indeed. Should one choose to follow up this education combined with his practical work on the golf course I have no doubt but what he would be a very much sought after man.

Some people are inclined to "pooh bah" the idea that a college can teach greenkeeping and I want to rise up in defense of this college on this subject. There is no college that I know of that professes to teach greenkeeping so the courses are given for greenkeepers to aid them in their problems and give them knowledge that will make them better and more valuable men. I think most everyone will agree that it is hard to find a greenkeeper today in possession of the knowledge covered in this course and who can gainsay the fact that any man having this knowledge would not make a better man to the club he may be with. I make bold to say that greenkeeping would soon be in the ranks of the professions if such was the case.

Fescue Rough Works Well to Speed Play

By R. WALLACE PECKHAM
Sachuest Golf Club

IN JULY, 1928 GOLFDOM, I promised to report on an experiment to sow rough to sheep fescue.

When our course was originally laid out on two fairways the first 75 yards of rough was seeded to sheep fescue and unless the soil was too rich the topped drives were always visible until clover came in. This suggested making all the rough over to fescue, wherever the drives fell out of the fairway. The experiment was made possible by a gift of \$500.00 from a generous member. The President, also chairman of the greens committee, advised its use for this purpose. Some eminent man recently wrote that we are sadly in need of bigger and better cuss words, the old ones being worn out, constantly mis-used and totally inadequate to modern needs. Now, if we lack inventive genius for increasing our supply, why not decrease the demand by decreasing by one-half the number of golf balls lost in the rough.

Our plan was to plow a strip beginning 125 yards from the tee and extending 100 yards on the rough on the right hand side of the fairway. This strip beginning with one furrow gradually widens out to 20 furrows 20 yards ahead, and diminishes on the same angle to one furrow at the 225 yard mark.

All sod was removed. This served a double purpose—eliminating the clover roots and making an excellent base for next year's compost heap. Then this ground was disked soft, the stones raked off and seeded generously with sheep fescue. This experiment was conducted in late October and November so only a part was ready for seeding in the fall, but that seeded in the fall came out far superior to that seeded last spring. When this work of seeding is left for spring it will be found practicable to run the units right over the rough to discourage rag weeds, etc. until the fescue spreads over the ground and, possibly for the first season, occasionally. Naturally it tends to practically widen the fairway, temporarily, and this does not hurt the feeling of those who can not keep in "the straight and narrow way." On a dog-leg corner or where a strip of rough separates two parallel fairways, the entire rough should be removed and seeded to sheep fescue.