

MAINTENANCE POLICIES that make GOOD at Blackhawk

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AS every greenkeeper has learned, it is impossible to follow entirely any hard and fast rules, for I can think of no business that is so governed by weather conditions as is ours. Each morning, we might say, presents its particular problems of adjusting plans to conditions.

To go into every detail of Blackhawk's methods of maintenance would not prove profitable, as we follow in a general way the accepted methods of present day practice.

Labor management we all recognize at once as one essential that if properly handled will go a long way in the solution of many of our other problems. We recognize that the quality and quantity of available workmen varies somewhat in different sections, and we find ourselves particularly fortunate at Blackhawk Country Club in being able to secure exceptionally good, reliable men, most of whom have been with us four, five, and six years. Each man has his own work for which he is trained and held responsible. In order to stay on our force a man must do his work as directed, in a workmanly fashion, in a reasonable length of time, and show an interest in his work.

Report System Employed

Each man understands that he is expected to report to me anything that he may see on the course that is out of order or calls for my special attention. All our men are hired by the hour and receive pay for overtime whenever it is necessary to call on them for special work. Our rule is to treat our workmen as we would wish to be treated if we were in their places, and we have the respect and friendship of the entire force. One faultfinder can spoil a whole crew and the sooner we get rid of him the better.

Assaying Purchasing

Every greenkeeper should keep himself informed as to labor-saving machinery. The test of whether a club should purchase such machinery is: will it do the work as well or better than we are able to do it by any other method at a real sav-

ing of time and labor, and: do we require the services of such a machine for a sufficient number of hours each year to justify the investment. If it meets these requirements we should purchase it by all means.

It is poor economy to try to make the old tractors or mowers or any other machine do after they have reached the stage when they are sure to give trouble instead of service. We believe it pays to give men good tools to work with and insist that they take proper care of them, which they are much more likely to do than if they are given poor ones.

Watering very properly suggests itself to us as of major importance, and I believe the only rule to govern this is the condition of the green itself. All greens on the same course do not require the same amount of water. Experience should teach us to tell immediately by the feel of the turf under our feet just what the water requirements of each green are.

As the edges of greens always dry out the most, especially on raised or banked greens, we make it a rule to sprinkle well outside the green itself.

Compost Practice

In regard to fertilizing greens I expect to be accused of being old-fashioned. We still believe in the good old compost pile, and when I say old, I mean at least three years old, and right here is, in my opinion, why it has been so condemned lately. We might well expect to get all kinds of weeds and disease from compost only a year or less old. We make a pile each year, with the top wide and sloping to the center to hold water better, sufficiently large to meet the requirements of a year. This is made of horse manure and good top-soil in layers about a foot thick each, to a height of about six feet. If we expect to have good compost we must put good material into it. This is allowed to lie for a year, then turned under and mixed, taking care to leave the top wide and sloping toward the center each time it is turned, until the last be-

fore using when it is left with a crowning top to shed water. When we are ready to use this material it is screened and mixed in a common cement mixer ten parts compost with five of sand and from two to four pounds ammonium sulphate per 1,000 square feet of surface varied according to the season of the year. The screen and mixed are so placed that they run at the same time from one engine, and the compost is shoveled from the screen directly into the mixer. In this way we think we have reduced the labor cost about to the minimum. The first top dressing is applied just as soon as it is fit in the spring, then again in from four to six weeks and so on according to the requirements of the greens.

I like to give the greens a late top-dressing which is rather heavy, as I think it sends them into the cold weather with lots of vitality and also makes a covering or mulch for the roots. For these same reasons and also because it has a decided tendency to produce that erectness of blade which is every greenkeeper's aim, I am strong for this system of fertilization.

Mowing Methods

Poor methods in mowing have been the very point where otherwise good work has brought disappointment to many a greenkeeper. After the first few cuttings in the spring, or just as soon as the grass begins to grow well, we set the mowers to cut three-sixteenths of an inch in height and keep them there until late fall. If one does not start cutting short early, the greens get grainy and matted or, in other words, the blades do not stand erect. When once we have this condition it is very hard to overcome it.

Every greenkeeper rejoices in the marked improvement in greens mowers that have come in recent years. I have no doubt that there are a number of makes of nearly equal merit now on the market. The same applies to power green mowers, also. What I have said in regard to cutting greens refers entirely to creeping bent greens with which I am concerned.

Make a Complete Job

Ask any greenkeeper what his chief concern is and I suppose he would say his greens; and yet in order to make the thing complete and keep everyone happy we must maintain the same standards for fairways, tees, traps, bunkers, and rough. Just as a slight blemish may destroy an

otherwise beautiful picture so to neglect anyone of these may have the same effect.

All greenkeepers are still looking for some modern Moses to lead them out of the wilderness in which they find themselves in dealing with brown-patch.

We have had no trouble in controlling brown-patch by using ten pounds of bi-chloride of mercury and three pounds of ammonium chloride dissolved in 50 gallons of water. Mix one-half gallons of this stock solution with 50 gallons of water. Fifty gallons to 500 square feet may be safely applied. This has not failed to stop each attack, although we had to use it two and, in a few cases, three times on the same green during the season.

We hope some of our scientific men to whom we owe so much may soon discover a real cure for this menace to our pet greens.

Make Changes Deliberately

No doubt Mr. Noer is correct in his suggestion that there is need for a revision of methods in greenkeeping, and the same thing is true in many other lines of business. I have sufficient confidence in the alertness and ability of the men engaged in this line to believe that every exigency will be met and each problem solved in time, and I prefer to make changes deliberately rather than rush from methods that are giving reasonably good results to new and untried methods, but I am always trying to maintain an open mind toward forward movements.

Our program for the coming season will follow much the same lines as that of the previous season except that, in view of the reports that are coming to us relative to the use of arsenate of lead, we plan to give it a thorough test on some of our greens. We also plan to do some experimental work in forestalling attacks of brown-patch by using light applications of the solution mentioned in this article.

In closing I would like to stress the importance of tidiness, a place for everything and everything in its place, each detail attended to just when it should be, always just a little ahead of our work instead of the work ahead of us.

BOWLING-ON-THE-GREEN is a good pastime for your members' evening and idle-hour amusement, and the equipment costs very little. A few special bowling balls and a well-turfed lawn are about all.