

How Four Leading Greenkeepers

JOHN MAC GREGOR*

Chicago Golf Club
Wheaton, Ill.

—carefully schedules in advance the work to be done and then sees that his men follow the schedule closely.

It is only fitting that some public acknowledgment be made of the remarkable work that your Second Vice President, John MacGregor, has done at Chicago Golf Club during the year just completed. His achievement is not only proof of his knowledge of grasses and ability to handle men, but is evidence of sound thinking and planning as evidenced by the unusual results obtained under the method of operation which for lack of a better term, we have called the MacGregor System of greenkeeping.

His system is adaptable to any club where the greenkeeper is willing to knuckle down and run his operations with the same degree of attention that a small manufacturer devotes to his plant.

The MacGregor system has had one year's trial. It has been a severe season—one of unusual expense. The system has demonstrated itself so well that there is no reason why, with the same application, it should not do equally well year after year. The club or greenkeeper not operating under this or a similar plan can not control cost with any degree of efficiency. It is inevitable that as knowledge of its operation grows, more and more progressive clubs will adopt it.

The continued bickering about greens appropriations is answered under this plan, because it cuts costs and maintains quality, and the one without the other means nothing. In discussing this matter, we will talk of the MacGregor system rather than the man. He originated it—he operated it—others will inevitably adopt it. The method was the result of long experience and an inventive mind. The

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*MacGregor method as described in address of I. R. Allen, green-chairman, Chicago G. C., at Midwest Greenkeepers' Assn. meeting.

A. E. ARNOLD

Masonic Country Club
Comstock Park, Mich.

—allots an equal portion of the grounds to each man and thus makes each man a complete greenkeeper.

I AM pleased to write what I can regarding our system of labor; how we operated at first, how we are doing now, and how it seems to work out for us.

First, I might say something of the kind of organization I am keeping greens for, the magnitude of our grounds and some of the conditions under which we are operating which, of course, would have some bearing on our system of labor management that might differ with the management of many other well-managed golf clubs.

We are a Masonic country club organization of approximately 1,500 members, operating on a nominal dues and fee-paying basis. The membership is interested largely in golf, although many are tennis players, some are bowling-on-the-green enthusiasts, and many are interested in all activities the Club is equipped to offer them. We maintain at present 27 holes of golf, occupying more than half of our 400-acre holdings, situated along the west slopes of Grand River Valley just north of the Grand Rapids city limits.

Our bowling green has six lanes. We have two professional clay tennis courts and two asphalt courts, a children's playground, about two miles of scenic driveways through our wooded areas. We have many other activities, such as indoor baseball, quoits, archery, all of which require maintenance labor of varied classes.

Our club has been organized about ten years, and during that time it has passed through the periods of construction, semi-construction and maintenance and on into the period of nearly all maintenance, at which time we have now about arrived.

Our golf grounds, both in its construction and its maintenance stages, has been our major problem; however, the many other things we have, have required their

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Chairman Lauds MacGregor's Greenkeeping Plan

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application of the method was that of a capable greenkeeper.

This is rather a long preamble. The net results are what will interest you. Bear in mind, please, that we are dealing with greenkeeping, excluding course changes and new construction.

Chicago Golf Club's greenkeeping costs always closely paralleled those of similar

clubs in the Chicago District. Our standard of course maintenance has always been very high — with a small, well informed and rather critical membership watching conditions closely.

Take the year 1929. Total greenkeeping costs (labor and upkeep) were \$26,263.20. The budget, made under

the MacGregor system, at the beginning of 1930 was (labor and upkeep) \$22,430.00. This substantial saving was to be accomplished without reducing wages and without skimping the course—neither of which were even considered.

Now as a matter of fact, in spite of the drought which necessitated materially more watering than was planned (we water our fairways) and a serious attack of grubs under the fairway turf, the close of our year showed on the club books a total (labor and upkeep) expense of just \$19,652.75. *Nearly \$3,000.00 under the budget—over \$6,500.00 reduced from the previous year!*

Our members commented on the good condition of the course—and in some respects we did even more work than in previous years. For example, traps were raked daily instead of once a week.

Now as to how this was accomplished—the detail of the working of the MacGregor system.



John MacGregor, greenkeeper at course Rob Jones pronounced best conditioned course he'd ever played.

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The green-committee talked with MacGregor and he reduced his ideas to paper. The experiment was approved. Course changes, equipment, etc., as variables from year to year were separated from labor and upkeep, which are the continuous charges. The green-committee acted as a unit. The greenkeeper dealt with the body as one man instead of receiving separate orders from three individuals.

A careful analysis was made by months of the year as to the work entailed in the various months. A working calendar dividing the work into eleven divisions was made.

The greatest problem in greenkeeping is admittedly the supervision of labor. Articles have been repeatedly written about it—the subject is under continual discussion by interested parties.

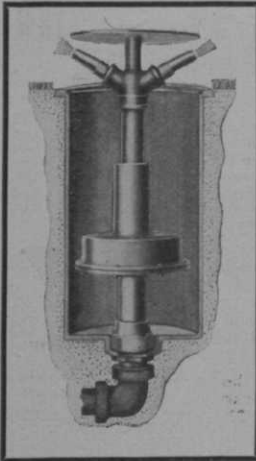
Where a crew is working together, control of work is simple—the sluggard—and the slipshod are under observation. With from fifteen to twenty men scattered out over a hundred acres or so, individual supervision is impossible—even with a car—a horse or field glasses. Effectively dealing with this condition will naturally bring about a substantial labor saving.

To meet it, MacGregor made a complete

change—a revolutionary change in accepted greenkeeping organization and supervision plans. Under the old method, the problem was one of watching the men to see that the work was done. He discarded this entirely.

Under the MacGregor system, golf course work is divided into eleven broad divisions—then subdivided into daily tasks for individual workmen. Each workman has a reasonable and fair daily task to perform. The greenkeeper inspects the work and its quality. Whether the laborer is fast or slow makes no difference. Whether he can or cannot deliver a good average day's work of good quality is not a question. The story is written in his results. This does not mean an abandoning of superintendence—but it does mean a simplification of it.

With this new plan, the year's calendar of seasonable work was analyzed and reduced to individual day's labor. Men were allotted work as efficiently as possible and probable costs forecast. A monthly budget was made—with some question, which was evidenced by the fact that a thousand dollar reserve was established to play safe. Still—the total project was substantially under the preceding year.



Here is the ROBIN POP-UP in action. Far-throwing nozzle covers the outer part of a circle 80 to 100 feet in diameter. Other nozzle covers inner circle. When not in use, the sprinkler drops down into its casing, completely out of the way.

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THE ROBIN POP-UP

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The MacGregor system was launched—with the agreement that changes would be quickly made where weaknesses developed.

But no weaknesses developed! The plan, founded on many years of experience, solved the problem it was aimed at. Costs ran far below the budget estimates. But don't think it ran itself. On the contrary.

Various forms available for greenkeeping cost records were examined, but discarded because they were all designed for office accounting, and what MacGregor wanted was daily field records. So he worked out a series of forms to control his labor costs according to his own ideas. They are simple and comprehensive, not requiring a bookkeeper to run them, but they tell far more than most existing club greens records.

These forms were divided into the major divisions of labor and upkeep costs. From his time books and purchases he posted continuously. Each month's totals were taken off and records made of "over" or "under" the budget for that particular month, as well as the standing against the budget for the year to date.

In looking over these records at the end of the year, it is really a case of the greenkeeper keeping books to know where he stands every day, and it was well worth while. There was no waiting for the accountants; the greenkeeper was in closer touch with his costs from day to day than could possibly be the case through normal channels of accounting. And control of costs can not be fully accomplished unless the man in charge of expenditures knows where he is at every moment of the time.

If the question were asked: "What are the basics of the MacGregor system?" the following would be a good answer—assuming to start with, that the club has a greenkeeper who knows grasses and his work:

1. *The handling of labor largely, the inspection of assigned tasks instead of the supervision of men to see that they do their work.*
2. *A fair and honest budgeting of labor and upkeep by month and division of work.*
3. *A system of records kept by the greenkeeper showing him daily where his money goes.*
4. *Prompt and immediate action by the greenkeeper to eliminate waste—to control his costs.*

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