

Many Vital Course Jobs Can Best Be Tackled in Winter

By VERNON STOUTEMYER

WHEN THE respective green-chairmen of the Elysian Hills and the Wampadoodle clubs begin to check up on the condition and appearance of the course early next season it's dollars to doughnuts that the greenkeeper who will do the least perspiring under the collar will be the one who got in the best licks fixing up the course and renovating of machinery this winter.

One of the marks of a superior greenkeeper is that he is always a few jumps ahead of the club officials. The greenkeepers who are going to be driving high powered cars a few years hence are the ones who are right now putting punch and initiative into their jobs. Initiative is the ability to do the right thing without being told. It depends partly on seeing clearly the things which need to be done, things which may be so obvious that they are unnoticed by the average person.

Even if the conscientious greenkeeper sometimes feels that his efforts in behalf of the club are not always noticed and appreciated by the officials and the members, he may feel fairly confident that his services will some day be demanded somewhere. Still, in spite of all of the numerous discussions of recent years on efficient course maintenance in the face of slashed budgets, the sad fact remains that today many greenkeepers simply cannot do themselves justice. Nevertheless, playing conditions on some of the hardest hit clubs seem almost miraculous, and show what can be done.

Many of the larger clubs have found it is wise to keep the greenkeeper and possibly even some of his working force employed during the winter. This is not true of smaller clubs in a great many cases and here the greenkeeper should strive to increase the work done on the course during the slack season. First of all, it will doubtless be necessary to convince the hard-headed business men who manage the club that the work is justified, and indeed this is as it should be.

It is a great advantage to the green-

keeper, on the smaller course in particular, to be a good mechanic. More than ever, in this year of grace will the motors and equipment need overhauling. Regardless of the age of the machinery which is to be used for the coming season, it should be put in first class shape and should be greased and ready for service when the golf season opens. Mower units should be sharpened or sent back to the factory for reconditioning.

Mild Winter Forecast

There are a number of reasons why this season will probably be an especially good time for clubs to do some extra outdoor winter work. Both wages and commodity prices seem to be on a long upward sweep. In addition, the present winter is apt to have more stretches of mild weather than usual. If what scientists tell us regarding the 11-year weather cycle corresponding to sun spot changes is true, then we may expect a few more mild open winters. After that they will become more severe until some time near 1950 when they will be more mild again. The mild weather of the latter part of 1933 has been very favorable to outdoor construction work, particularly to that conducted under the numerous relief work projects.

Is Winter Seeding Practical?

More information should be available on the winter fertilization of fairways and tees. Good results have occasionally been reported of sowing grass seed on frozen or snow-covered ground. Of course this method would not be suitable for slopes with considerable wash. Alternate freezing and thawing and the early spring rains imbed much of the seed in the soil where it is ready to germinate at the earliest possible date. It has been claimed that this gives a turf more quickly than sowing in the early spring, after the ground has become dry and workable. This method of sowing closely approximates the conditions under which grass seed is germinated in nature. Since it has been found that reproducing natural conditions of the

forest in the nursery gives best germination of tree seeds, may we not also surmise that sowing grass seed in mid-winter should be studied in comparison with the efficiency of spring or fall seeding.

Likewise, the pros and cons of spring vs. fall fertilization of turf have been thrashed out many times, while the effect of applications in the winter has apparently aroused little curiosity. While we should not want to be understood as advocating fertilization of grass during dormancy, an interesting example which has come under our observation seems to be worth recording. The wide-awake greenkeeper of an Iowa golf club near to an old army camp noticed that the manure from the stables had been carried to a place in some nearby woods. At a negligible expense to the club this well rotted manure was hauled to the club grounds during the winter and was applied liberally to all of the tees, which were of Kentucky bluegrass. When the playing season began the slight amount of litter that was left was raked off. The density and deep color of the turf the following season was remarkable. One noticeable effect was that the grass of the tees was green and in active growth, while the adjoining fairways were still brown and lifeless.

Work on Trees in Winter

Trees on the golf course may be pruned during winter or early spring. Pruning aids in controlling insect pests or diseases. Local outbreaks of one or the other are common, but fortunately most of them are not very destructive for more than a few years. Thus a little attention over a short time may save valuable trees on the course.

A typical example of an insect pest which is causing a loss of fine trees on some of the golf courses of the corn belt just now is the two-lined chestnut borer which works just under the bark and injures the layer of the tree from which growth takes place. The leaves drop from the tree in midsummer and soon the tree becomes stag-headed. If the infestation is severe the tree soon dies. The insect is especially deadly to red or black oaks, but causes little damage to the white oak. About the only things which can be done are to fertilize the trees to keep them in vigorous enough growth to repair the injury, and to cut down and burn dying trees. This will prevent the spread of the adults to other nearby trees the fol-

lowing season, and will furnish good firewood for the club fireplace or the heater in the work shed.

Policing the Grounds

There are many things which can be done around the course during the winter. Perhaps there is rubbish to destroy, new sand to haul to traps, etc. There may be places where an additional bridge could be used or where a few steps and a railing on a steep incline would be appreciated by the elderly members. Calendars of operations for various times of the year for florists, gardeners and other horticulturists have been published.

The value of a good heated workshop for indoor work in winter is being realized, and the trend is definitely toward the building of more compost and machinery sheds and more workshop space. Here the machinery can be overhauled in comfort. Ball washers, benches, and all kinds of wooden and metal fixtures about the course can be painted at a temperature which will be high enough to give the best results. The life of flag poles and other fixtures of the greens and tees has been all too short in the past.

In order to keep up with new ideas the greenkeeper should set aside a few days of the winter to attend the convention of the NAGA and also some college short course if possible. He may have time to read some good books on soils and fertilizers, or some of the articles on turf culture in back issues of *GOLFDOM* or other turf publications which he didn't have time to read during the summer.

Undoubtedly the greenkeeping profession carries with it some degree of seasonal employment. It has been our humble effort to show that it need not be so, if greenkeepers sell the idea that their services are valuable in the winter as well as in the summer. Perhaps nothing will do it as well as a goodly number of actual demonstrations.

"CUREX," NEW TURF PREPARATION, BEING INTRODUCED

New York City.—A new brown-patch preventive and turf disinfectant, to be marketed under the trade name "Curex," is being introduced by W-G Chemical Co., 500 Fifth Ave. G. G. Wittwer of that organization writes: "Dr. E. D. Wilson and I have been working with turf disinfectants for a long time, know the game, and in 'Curex' we have a really unusual and outstanding product." The company will gladly supply literature on request.