

If There's Seeding to Do, Do It In the Fall

By LAWRENCE S. DICKINSON

FROM SEPTEMBER 1st until the clubhouse is closed for the winter and the divot taking course experts have gone south to pick on the southern greenkeepers, my sympathy for the greenkeeper increases. He has been wisely carrying a margin of safety in his budget, and because the fiscal year is drawing to a close, the executive committee suddenly finds it out. It is a queer thing, but greenkeepers just won't learn that it is a regular racket of some committees to grab the grounds maintenance savings.

Well! Given a golf course, a thrifty greenkeeper having a \$300 credit balance above his budget, and a short term green-chairman. What becomes of the \$300? The answers are many and varied, but all agree that in 75 per cent of the cases (it used to be 99 44/100 per cent) the \$300 is spent for luxuries about the clubhouse, course design alterations, or a chairman's hobby. Where does fall seeding come in?

Scientific, technical, semi-technical and practical articles have been written about fall seeding. Real experts, copy experts and practical turf growers have lectured about fall seeding. Both articles and lecturers agree that fall is the correct season in which to sow grass seed, and common sense dictates so. Yet many golf clubs (if it were the greenkeepers I'd say so) deliberately or thoughtlessly fail to sow a single grass seed in the fall.

I appreciate the psychology of the situation; the grass is browning and bare spots are less noticeable; cool days and cold nights do not seem conducive to seed germination; thoughts of the nearness of winter make one skeptical; and the working force can be used for something else besides the grass because the season is nearly finished. Only a person who is a turf grower by profession will overcome this prejudice, and not say "wait until spring."

It Pays to Seed Weedy Areas

There are many areas bordering golf courses that have been thinly turfed, bare,

and unsightly for years, but because they do not affect the play, nothing has been done about them. Also, there are many areas on the club grounds that are covered with weeds and weed grasses, particularly crab grass, that offer a source for weed infestation in nearby greens and fairways. In the above instance, club officials coming back from the south have a choice between finding a tidy and weed-free carpet of turf in place of the spotted or bare areas; or some course improvement such as a new trap about number 6 green, or an additional tee.

The first choice will fail to satisfy the club's players yet it may easily save annually the cost of several weeders because of the removal of a source of weed infection. It will also improve the putting surface of the greens. Cleaning up and seeding down weedy areas will pay for the actual cost within a few years, and will return high dividends in satisfaction. Seeding the bare spots in the fall enables the club's officials to offer to its returning members a new picture, freshly painted. The cost of the seeding is returned several fold in enthusiastic member interest, and the psychological reaction is similar to what one has when wearing the Easter suit.

The second choice has only playing satisfaction as a dividend, which often fails to affect the added money cost of maintenance.

Fall Is Best Time to Seed

In the fall, play decreases and therefore the mechanical wear on the tees and other areas decreases. In the spring, play and the accompanying wear increases. Fall versus spring seeding of tees is a gamble between deep roots, less mechanical wear, cold weather and spring heaving vs. thin roots, increasing wear, and easy fungus prey. I'll take my chances and bet on the fall-sown grass seedling.

It is sound practice to fertilize turf in the spring, especially if only one dosage can be given the grass. If there is money

enough to fertilize in the fall, the fertilizer should be applied at the start of the growing season. Fall-sown grass seedlings have developed rootlets and not hairs (the mouths of the plant) and are sitting at the table "in a big chair" ready for the spring breakfast. Like any youngster, it will get its share, and grow fast.

Spring-sown seed is always late for breakfast. The spring fertilizer has already been applied, used by the mature grass or leached from the root-soil zone. Fertilizers, especially inorganics, offer available plant food in the spring much earlier than the soil can be properly worked for seeding. If they don't, the plant food becomes available at the same time the seed bed is ready and many seeds are killed by fertilizer concentrates, and much of the fertilizer is lost before the seedling develops an independent root. The above paragraph applies to seeding bare spots or greens or fairways.

In the fall, good cultural practice requires the lifting of the mower knife. The mowing interval lengthens and ceases. In the spring, good cultural practice also demands that the knives be raised for a few weeks, and the mowing intervals shortened until it becomes daily.

Fall sown grass seedlings may be clipped two or three times in the first four weeks of their life, and will have the late fall (after mowing) period and pre-mowing period in the spring to become strong before the spring mowing starts. Spring sown seedlings can seldom get started before the mowing starts, and are clipped almost daily in the first month of their lives. It is a scientific fact that close clipping of grass seedlings greatly reduces the root system. We know from practice that it destroys a large percentage of plants. The above also applies to the seeding of bare spots in existing turf.

Hagen, Home Town Boy, Makes Good—Natives Celebrate

ROCHESTER, N. Y., knows that it takes one hundred years to raise a century plant, and apparently feels that it may be another hundred years before Rochester sires another golf champion with the string of records to his credit that Walter Hagen has been able to amass.

On August 7th, 8th and 9th, in connection with the celebration of the Rochester Centennial, the Hagen Testimonial Open

championship was held at Oak Hill CC. The tournament did not have a story-book finish, with Hagen emerging triumphant as the winner, for Leo Diegel walked off with first honors, while Ky Laffoon was runner-up.

The ball which Hagen putted on the 18th green of his last round was autographed by Walter and, together with an autographed photograph, newspaper clippings covering the event, phonograph records, etc., was placed in a steel box which is to be opened a hundred years from now. That is, it is to be opened in a hundred years, if somebody doesn't forget in the meantime.

At the conclusion of the tournament a testimonial dinner was held, at which 400 prominent residents of Rochester and the participants in the tournament were present.

During the dinner the band started a rousing march and a banner was brought into the dining room reading "Hagen on Parade," which was followed by another banner reading, "Born in Rochester, N. Y., December 21, 1893. Then came one of the Rochester young ladies dressed as a nursemaid, carrying a baby.

Then a banner, "Caddie Rochester Country Club" and a little fellow about ten years of age trotted in, carrying an enormous set of golf clubs, specially built for the occasion.

Then came the banner "U. S. Open Champion, Chicago, 1914," and behind this, a young fellow with high neck sweater and cap, trousers about to his shoe tops, who looked for all the world like Walter did at that time.

Another banner, "British Open Champion, 1922," and a very swagger young man in white double breasted suit, head up in the air, strutted in with his caddie, stopped in front of the speaker's table, nonchalantly pulled out a driver and swaggered away, indicating that a very considerable change had taken place in Hagen between the winning of his 1914 championship and his British Open victory.

Then as the climax, came the banner "P.G.A. Buffalo, 1934," and an old man hobbled in on crutches, supported by two strapping youths. Everyone, including Hagen, indulged in a hearty laugh.

Voluminous speeches were made, telling what each speaker thought Hagen had done for the game in general and for the boosting of his own city of Rochester, in particular.