

# YOUR TURF PROBLEMS

... and their solution

## QUESTION:

Our soil is heavy, and blue grass is uniform but thin. In summer players resent parched, hard fairways, so we propose to install a water system and re-seed. Is this the answer to our problem?

## ANSWER:

No: The proposed program is not the sole answer. Sparse grass underlies member complaints, so increased grass density is the first necessity. Dense turf provides a softer surface cushion, and also curbs loss of soil moisture as a result of direct evaporation.

By keeping soil wet, water eliminates hard surfaces, but it will not improve character of turf despite contemplated re-seeding. In fact, ultimate deterioration is inevitable.

Because water revives scorched grass in the summer, many clubs *bastily* conclude that irrigation is the only necessity for good turf. For the first few years fairways are extolled, but a rude awakening occurs when clover, crab grass, and other weeds eventually predominate. Then the tendency is to lay all blame to irrigation and assume no responsibility for overlooking or ignoring the necessity for supplementary fertilization.

In any scheme of fairway improvement, irrigation ranks second to fertilization. By promoting continuous growth throughout the playing season, and by accentuating leaching, water actually increases rather than diminishes need for fertilizer.

Turf-forming grasses spread of their own accord, provided the soil contains moisture and an ample supply of plant food. New plants arising from underground stems, called rhizomes, account for increased density of blue grass. These rhizomes are produced in greatest abundance during the cool, moist spring and fall seasons. So aside from occasional

years with dry spring or fall seasons, grass density can be increased without irrigation.

Since blue grass coverage is uniform on your fairways, increased density can be obtained without resorting to re-seeding. Failure of grass to spread is the result of impoverished soil, rather than acute moisture shortage. That grass is a voracious feeder, especially with respect to nitrogen, is not fully appreciated.

For the past four to five years agitation for fairway improvement has been an annual event at your club. Each year enthusiasm ceased when the cost of fertilizer was submitted to the directors. The present proposal to spend ten to twenty times this amount for a water system can be justified only if the annual budget can include cost of necessary fertilizer, as well as the expense of watering and additional mowing.

Admittedly, irrigation and fertilization will speed turf improvement, and will maintain green turf throughout the playing season. But, if the annual budget cannot cover the expense of both, then the sensible decision is to improve the turf first, and defer the water system until such time as the maintenance budget can carry both items.

Tell us about your Turf Problem. The facilities and services of our Soil Testing Laboratory and Field Agronomists are at your disposal, within reasonable limitations.

*Turf Service Bureau*

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