YOUR TURF PROBLEMS
. . . and their solution

QUESTION: Our course, in northern Indiana, is on a light-colored, heavy soil. Fairway turf consists of Kentucky blue grass, with a few scattering weeds. Grass is thin, but coverage is uniform. Soil reaction is pH 6.5 to 7.0, available phosphorus is medium to high, and available potash very high. Re-seeding and topdressing have been advised. Is this the best procedure?

ANSWER: No; re-seeding and topdressing will not materially improve turf. This method is altogether too expensive to justify serious consideration. The real answer is simple — a definite fertilizer program.

Although re-seeding may seem logical, it is hardly reasonable to expect young seedlings, with meager roots, to compete successfully with established grass for the limited supply of plant food. Therefore, unless needed fertilizer is supplied first—re-seeding is almost sure to fail. On the other hand, re-seeding enthusiasts neglect or overlook the fact that existing grass will spread and thereby form dense turf — providing the soil contains ample plant food.

Re-seeding is a gamble on heavy soil, even though fertility is high. With each rain, the light seed is floated out and carried away, or it lodges in adjoining clumps of grass. This cannot be entirely prevented by topdressing.

Aside from the necessity for covering seed, topdressing is often advocated to eliminate small "cuppy" depressions. These automatically disappear as the grass thickens. By introducing crabgrass and other objectionable weeds, topdressing has ruined, rather than improved, many fairways.

Re-seeding is justified only when fairways are practically devoid of turf, or where it is necessary to introduce a more desirable grass. Then cross-seeding with an alfalfa and grass disc seeder is the best method, for this machine cuts the seed into the soil and hence eliminates the necessity for topdressing.

Your problem is simple in every respect. Re-seeding and topdressing can be dismissed as unnecessary, because turf, although thin, consists of Kentucky blue grass, which is ideal for your locality. Since soil tests eliminate the necessity for using lime and potash, and show the supply of available phosphorus quite high, nitrogen feeding is the key to increased turf density.

Light gray color of soil is further evidence of an acute nitrogen shortage. Nitrogen exists in the dark-colored organic matter, so light colored soils are low in humus and in this vital, growth-promoting element also. Hence, improved turf depends upon generous nitrogen feeding until desired density is obtained; then quantities can be reduced somewhat.

For the next several years, use a good organic fertilizer, such as Milorganite, at 700 to 1,000 pounds per acre in the spring, and at 1,200 to 1,500 pounds per acre in the fall. Besides supplying ample nitrogen, Milorganite will also provide sufficient phosphoric acid, so the use of phosphate is not necessary.

Some water soluble nitrogen fertilizer can be used also, if desired. Use from 100 to 200 pounds per acre of ammonium sulphate, with the lower rates suggested for Milorganite.

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