

# Short Courses and Meetings Eased Wartime Problems

By RAY GERBER

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★ The past two years have been a struggle for the greenkeeper. This year will be just as bad if not worse, as far as labor is concerned. However, greenkeepers have educated themselves to the point where they are able to take advantage of everything possible and keep the courses and club grounds in almost pre-war condition. A great deal of this knowledge was obtained by attending local greenkeeper association meetings and the educational conferences. Our Mid-West Greenkeepers' association presents a well-qualified speaker or two at each meeting during the winter months.

"Speakers at the educational conferences held once a year at universities are always men who are qualified to talk on subjects assigned to them. One authority may talk on disease, another one on insects, another on different types of grasses, their nature, and what to expect when one is forced to work against nature. This type of meeting helps the greenkeeper to find out just what he wants to know.

In most cases he does not have to do any experimenting, as someone has already done that. This, in turn, saves the club many dollars in material and many hours of labor. I think that the reason why greenkeepers have advanced so well in the past few years is that they are not as shy as they used to be. Visiting one another, or attending local greenkeepers meetings, has built up their confidences in themselves. Most greenkeepers are not afraid to ask questions as they were in the past.

The only greenkeeper who is afraid to ask a question is usually one who is new in the game or one who seldom attends meetings. Several times I have asked questions at our meetings for a member who before the meeting had mentioned some difficulty he was having. At later meetings this was not necessary because his questions were so thoroughly answered, and the new member knew he was with a group of men who were trying to help each other.

A book could be written on the things that a good greenkeeper can teach himself and the knowledge he gathers when attending local meetings. The coordination of the greenkeeper meetings and educational conferences or short courses, re-

solves itself into a simple principle of education. The value and purpose of education is for the individual to apply those things that he picks up from the classroom or by experience to his everyday job. Frequently people who are educated do not have the faculty of applying their knowledge on a practical basis. I think that this can be elaborated upon by many instances that happen on the job; factual matters always win over theoretical matters.

It used to be when it came to the construction or maintenance end of a golf course every club had its own set of experts. These experts frequently became club officials, and after the damage was done, they are automatically retired from office, and the greenkeeper naturally inherits all of this grief. I can say this is not true at the present time at many clubs. And this is one reason why these clubs' maintenance cost is far below what it used to be. Green chairmen are just as interested in a good golf course as the greenkeeper is, because when the course is bad, so is the locker room for them.

The equipment manufacturers have gone a long way in helping out the cost of maintenance. They have manufactured putting green mowers that will cut 18 holes in five to eight hours, whereas it used to take around 15 to 18 hours. There is a sand-trap rake that can be pulled with a tractor. With this rake one man can do as much as six used to do. A power sprayer will spray a green in three to five minutes, where it used to take the old style method about one hour. Lawn mower manufacturers have made power mowers to cut banks of green, tees and bunkers. One man can take care of these on an 18 hole course in eight hours, whereas it used to take about twenty hours.

The steep slopes on greens, tees and fairways bunkers have been eased at many clubs and are being cut with a tractor, thus saving many hours. Very few clubs are fortunate enough to have a full time mechanic. The greenkeeper who has had mechanical training has very little worry along this line. He sees that his equipment is thoroughly overhauled during the winter months. If properly done at this time, it will require very little

repairing during the summer other than minor adjustments.

Any person today who is operating a golf course with poor equipment certainly is behind the eight-ball.

When the war is over, equipment will become even more important, and labor secondary. This will lead to lower maintenance cost which in the end will bring the cost of golf within everyone's pocket book.

The height of cut on fairways seems to start a lot of good hot conversation. Most of us know that blue grass will do much better if cut not closer than one inch. A fourth of an inch longer is still better and will make a more dense turf. The extra growth shades the ground and thereby reduces loss of moisture from direct evaporation; consequently, the turf stays green longer and survives drought better. Shade also helps discourage clover, knot weed, crab grass, and many other weeds.

Fairways must be cut oftener when mowers are set to cut fairly high. Grass cut at  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch is only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches high even after grass grows an inch between cuttings. Fairways are still playable. However, when mowers are set to cut at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, grass is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by the time it is cut again, if interval between cuttings is the same. Then fairways are unplayable, because the golfers cannot find the ball in the long grass.

It seems that it is up to the individual club as to what height to cut their fairways. If they have the help and equipment which would enable them to cut the grass more often, naturally the  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch is the better, otherwise they will probably have to cut shorter and overlook the weeds that will come in the fairways, especially if they are watered.

Fairways that have a good percentage of bent are something different, because the higher cut on blue grass is no good on bent, and the low cut on bent is no good on blue grass. So one will have to figure this out himself and choose which he would rather have.

Weed control will probably become a standard practice after the war is over, and it is simple to trace this to the scientific work done through short courses and national educational conferences. I think I am safe in saying that the greenkeepers have done more advanced weed control work than any other group of the agricultural divisions.

The success of any club can be traced to good club officials, a good chairman at the head of each department, a good greenkeeper, good club house manager, good pro, good help and good equipment, all working together. It should always be remembered that in unity there is strength.

May, 1944

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