

# Drainage Still A Defect at Many Courses

By WILLIAM LYONS

You have heard many stories about the "hick" farmer. But to us all "hicks" are not farmers. We were laying hundreds of feet of 4" and 6" drain tile and a "city hick" came up and said, "Gosh, you guys are going to have a heck of a time finding all those to take them up this fall."

There are many city men who do understand the value of drainage. There are so many farmers who do not that the Department of Agriculture through the Soil Conservation Service has been paying farmers up to 48c a rod (16½ ft.) for putting in drain tile.

In most sections of our nation spring and early summer rains were excessive, so much so that even the city boys saw the need for drains in spots they never saw before. They are now drainage-conscious.

On the other hand a member said to me, "By the time you get the place drained, it will be so hot and dry you'll wish you hadn't drained it."

Now let's get everyone straightened out on the value of a drainage program for fairways.

First the "city hick" has to be told how tiling is a permanent installation. That the John Johnston tile job of 1835 near Geneva, New York, is still functioning.

As a publicity stunt we cut across a fairway on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday and the members had to play thru, over and around us. To many it was their first "look-see" at a tiling job.

It also gave us a chance to correct the misconception that "you won't need 'em when the weather is hot and dry," by showing our people how short rooted grasses are in wet places, and that short rooted grass is short on green color when periods of drought come.

One member said, "Why is this condition worse now than in past years?" That's a good sensible question.

There are mainly three reasons why drainage and more drainage is and will be needed on golf courses.

When the course was a farm the farmer planted every third or fourth year a long rooted crop, like alfalfa, clover, and corn. When the roots died, holes down deep into the subsoil were left and became water channels. Now those holes are filling up and no new ones are being put down.

The second reason is mowing fairways with heavy equipment when the soil is on the wet side. It has to be done and yet we are working against nature and are compacting the soil so that water and air enter very slowly.

Some fairways have had earthworm eradicators applied. This means less water channels into the subsoil.

These are enough facts to make it plain that we do have a problem. We must find a solution.

Most golf courses are now in Soil Conservation districts. If you don't know about your district find out from your County Agricultural Agent. Then find out if the S.C.D. has a drainage engineer. Then see if you can't hire him to make you a Master Drainage Plan. He will know, with your aid as greenkeeper, where to locate outlets, main lines and laterals. Sizes of tile, and depth of maximum efficiency based on your soil type. Let me warn you not to hire just any one who can squint thru a transit to do this job.

If you're stuck, call in a Drainage Engineer from your State College. Don't expect that as a greenkeeper you are necessarily fully qualified as a drainage engineer. If you are, you're lucky. Other courses have drainage problems too and should be glad to pay you or any other expert for the answers.

How about cost? Can your club afford it? Or, can you afford not to?

On the publinox when there is no play, there is no pay, some of us are learning too well. There is one course in our vicinity for sale, cheap, because few care to play it and lose balls, or play from footprints or tractor wheel marks.

To get a good play a course must be dry enough to open up on the first warm day in March, in our area. Otherwise the boys go to the drier course and get the habit. Consequently, season players are lost to the course, the pro shop and the concession stand.

On the private course it hurts a member's pride to say, "Our course was closed Memorial Day—too wet!" It hurts your pro shop, clubhouse and even the one-armed bandits don't do so good.

Drainage is one of those things your club will pay for many times over if you don't do something about it now!