

How Southern Greenkeeper Solves His Problems

By HUGH MOORE

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There was a day when a greenkeeper could be picked from the ranks of farmers, but that day has passed. Greenkeeping has now become a profession. It is no longer guess work or hit and miss methods.

To be successful in greenkeeping you must know what you are doing at all times and under all weather conditions. You cannot use the same methods in maintaining good turf when the sun is shining and the weather is hot as you would use in wet weather and under "muggy" conditions. Nature is your boss and your partner too. There are other controls determining the success of the greenkeeper's efforts.

First:—No matter how much knowledge or other qualifications a greenkeeper may have, he must have good equipment, the proper fertilizers, and watering facilities.

Second:—He must have an understanding green chairman with some knowledge of greenkeeping, who is broadminded and considerate of the trials and tribulations of the greenkeeper. This chairman must uphold his greenkeeper to the limit and keep outsiders, club members and officials, from knocking or criticizing unjustly. He should be the man for the greenkeeper to contact for all his needs and wants. No greenkeeper or other man can be successful taking advice and carrying out the ideas of men who do not know anything of the business.

The majority of greenkeepers have too many bosses to please and too little to work with. The greenkeeper is not a magician. Again I say, he must have the equipment needed and plenty of cooperation to be successful in golf course work. Without these he cannot produce.

Expensive Substitutes

I once had a chairman, a fine man, who knew absolutely nothing about golf course work. In the middle of the summer I ran out of topsoil, one of the most essential things used on bermuda greens if used properly. I notified my chairman and explained to him that we should have this top-soil at once. He suggested that I use soil from a ditch bank that every year produced a crop of weeds of every known vari-

ety. I explained to him that our greens would become infested with weeds and be practically ruined. However, he insisted that I use this soil. Before the season was over we spent \$580 weeding greens and we did not have a decent putting green all summer. I knew, but my chairman didn't, the pitfalls of poor substituting. If a greenkeeper does not know that then he should not be hired for the job. If he cannot produce under favorable conditions then it is time to make a change but he shouldn't have to be held accountable for the errors of officials.

No golf course is good without perfect greens, and so far as the south is concerned good greens can be maintained 12 months of the year. Summer greens in the south usually are bermuda. Winter greens can be rye, with redtop added, or Kentucky bluegrass. I have used both successfully.

To maintain a good bermuda green it must be fertilized at the proper time in the early spring and touched up thru the summer. There are many types of fertilizers that can be used. I, personally, am pleased with the results of Milorganite. This fertilizer is not dangerous. It is somewhat slow but it can be mixed with sulphate of ammonia or a fertilizer such as 4-8-6. This is a good fairway fertilizer also.

Bermuda greens should be topdressed when needed. I find that most greenkeepers topdress too much and too heavy. These greens also require a lot of water, but should not be watered between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. in extremely hot weather. Any other time is all right.

Sharp Greens Mowers Necessary

To maintain a good putting green surface that is true and on which the ball will not jump, a common fault of bermuda greens, you must have a sharp mower. One that will cut and not chew. I find that dull mowers are a common cause of poor condition of bermuda greens in the south, and also in the winter when the rye is in. Anytime that a mower will not cut a piece of paper clean it should not be used on the green. There should be at least one man on the course who knows how to adjust the

mowers. The blades should be against the knife so that you will get an even cut the full length of the blade.

Now for winter greens in the south: Any green that is 5000 sq. ft., or more, should not have less than 250 to 300 lbs. of rye seed per green. This can be put in all at one time if your labor is limited, but I would suggest two applications; holding out a little for touching up thru the winter. If you want a green that will putt as good as bent, add red top, the amount to be governed by what you can afford. Perhaps 20 to 30 lbs. per green would be a good estimate. Of course a greenkeeper should know exactly the size of his greens and how much his club can afford to spend. You cannot cut corners and pinch nickels and have the best.

In cutting winter or summer greens I suggest double cutting from different angles. Bermuda should be cut every day except Mondays.

It is my belief that improper construction is why many greens are in bad condition thruout the south. Most clubs are in a hurry to complete the construction job so play can start. In this haste the work is not done properly. I have built quite a few courses myself. I built some of them in a hurry and tried to save money and found out to my sorrow that the job was not done right. I always go back and check a course many times after my work is finished, and in doing so I find mistakes. These mistakes

were made from haste, penny pinching, and trying to follow the other fellow's advice when he did not know what it was all about.

Southern Greens Building

The proper materials must be had to obtain the best results. I will never build another green unless I can build it as it should be built by using the materials that are required for a good green, such as peat moss, porous soil, 4 inches of sifted topsoil, giving it time to settle from rain and artificial watering to see if it has the proper drainage and that there are no water pockets left, and the undulations and rolls are not too severe. I have seen greens that were unfair to the best putting touch in the world. In building a golf course, do it right or don't start. It will save money and give more pleasure to the members at all times.

The most important part in the construction of a green is your drainage.

I like to build greens with a base of 24 inch depth of oyster shells and one foot of cinders with porous soil mixed thru. Clay soil is dangerous unless it is used 5 to 6 feet below as a base. If this foundation can't be used, then tile your greens with a 4 inch tile, laid in oyster shells or cinders, using strips of burlap around your openings.

There are greens in golf courses being built by men today who know absolutely nothing about what they are doing. This

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USGA GREEN SECTION COMMITTEE MEETS AT RIVIERA



Members and guests of USGA Green Section Committee meet at Riviera CC, Los Angeles, Calif., on afternoon preceding USGA Open Championship play. First row: (L to R) James Standish, Jr., chmn.; Fielding Wallace, pres., USGA; Dell Griggs, pres., S. Calif. GA; Robt. T. Jones, representing Golf Architects Assn.; Colin Simpson, Chmn., Green Com., Los Angeles CC and newest member of USGA Green Section Com. Back row: (L to R) Chester Mendenhall, pres., GSA; O. J. Noer, Milwaukee, member; A. R. Emery, Salt Lake City, member; A. L. Brandon, Exec. Sec'y., GSA and member Green Sec. Com.

SOUTHERN GREENKEEPER

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is said to help the men and the clubs that are throwing away thousands of dollars not only in the construction line but by hiring pros and greenkeepers who do not know their jobs. We all have to learn but I believe we should be taught as assistant greenkeepers. This also goes for professionals. Just because a young fellow can hit a long ball and someone in the club likes him, he is not qualified as a good pro or greenkeeper. These inexperienced men are costing clubs thousands of dollars.

In construction work in the south the tees frequently are badly done. I find thru-out the south especially that the tees are too small. Tees should be built of good material. If they are high they require soil that will drain well. They should slope gradually from front, sides and back. This saves many dollars in maintenance. Build greens, tees, and traps, so that you will eliminate as much hand labor as possible. I do not believe in straight lines in cutting a green or in building one. They are not natural looking or have the golf interest required.

Clubs building new courses should take a little more time and turn under three or four crops of cowpeas, vetch clover, or whatever cover crops grow in that locality. This would save a lot of money in fertilizers in years to come. It would act as a soil builder by putting humus into the soil. However, the clubs are always in too much of a hurry to do this. The soil of the course should be analyzed to find out what it has and what it lacks. These are the things that will save money and will eliminate rebuilding at a later date.

As for brownpatch, I have had very little trouble with it in the south. I think a lot depends on the condition of your greens, which goes back to drainage, how and how much you water. Feeding also has a lot to do with it. I have used corrosive sublimate and calomel, Semesan, Nugreen and other standard fungus controls. They are all good and I think it a wise thing to use some late in the fall and early spring, also a touch-up sometime in June. The important thing about using these materials is to use the correct amount and water in good.

Rye grass and redtop both are subject in a mild way to disease and scald. Bent for southern greens requires more care and is more susceptible to diseases. I would say that most of the bent trouble comes from too much water and too much food thru the spring and summer months. Bent also suffers from a packing condition that goes back to drainage. My advice to the southern greenkeeper and the man paying the

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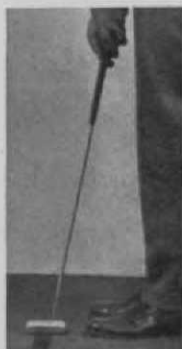
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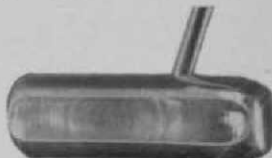
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bills is to stay away from bent grass at this time unless you have plenty of money to experiment with, and to replant with in the event you should lose greens. I have seen bent greens go out overnight in my home state of Virginia. I do believe that the time will come when bent greens will be in the entire south but not until we get the disease situation under better control. Bent grasses give a much better putting surface, but if properly cared for a Bermuda green can be maintained just as good.

While we are on the subject of grasses and greens I want to say that no green should be cut so close that you cannot stroke the ball properly. When you throw fear into a golfer to the extent that he has to tap the ball, then that green is too fast and not fair to the majority of golfers. There are a few players on the circuit who have a wonderful putting touch but the percentage is small. Some clubs shave their greens because they do not want low scoring. I do not think it should be done this way. It should be done by well trapping the course and distance, and not by frightening a man.

In selecting a site for a golf course, rolling land is best. I detest parallel fairways. Tees and greens should be built on knolls and hills. I do not think a blind hole is good golf construction. A green should be banked to face the shot, and elevated if possible. No green is good that breaks away from the shot. It should be well

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trapped in front somewhat, to the right and left, but seldom to the back.

As for crabgrass, this has sent many greenkeepers to bed at night with a headache. It has been one of my biggest problems and still is. Back in the old days the best method of getting rid of this weed has been by cutting it out. Then you have bad greens from one to two months. The real cause of so much crabgrass has been soil used for topdressing which was saturated with crabgrass seed. What is the use of picking your greens and then come back and put the same weed back on your greens with bad topdressing?

It would be better to use clean sand. That is what I have been doing for the past year and a half. My greens have been better and I have reduced weeds to a small degree. So, be careful what you use for topdressing. I am now using Soilicide crabgrass killer. This has been recommended to me highly. This is used one pint to 50 gals. of water in cool weather and one pint to 75 gals. of water during warm weather; repeated at 5 day intervals during cool weather; 7 to 10 days during warm weather. I am living in hopes that this will take care of crabgrass.

Some greenkeepers think that a good thick vigorous growth of grass on greens will eliminate crabgrass. I will agree as far as tees and fairways are concerned but on greens when you get too much bermuda grass it is hard to give a good putting surface where the ball will not jump. I like my greens a little on the thin side and then you eliminate a lot of runners and stems. When a bermuda green is too thick and heavy there is too much of a cushion and that calls for a lot of topdressing.

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