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## Treats Poa Annuua Before Seed Formation for Best Control

By BOB SCOTT  
Supt., Baltimore (Md.) CC

Poa annua can be a friend sometimes in this section, but a very treacherous one, especially when conditions do not suit it—such as extreme hot weather after seed formation. Then enough bent is needed in greens and fairways to replace it.

It is 31 years since I came to Baltimore. The greens in those days were mostly crab grass in the summer and Poa annua and clover the rest of the year. They were a sight to behold after the first good freeze.

My Chairman and I agreed to do something about all of the old greens which were not to be rebuilt or changed in any way. When I told him they would have to be burned out, he asked, "What, with fire?" I said not that way, but with chemicals and explained the purpose was to stop seed formation of these annual weeds. He gave me the "go ahead" signal. I could not start until the flowering season in August. We sprayed 14 greens with a strong solution of ammonium sulfate in bright sunlight to intensify the burn. We made a drag from stable brooms to bruise the plants and further increase the chemical action. There was no place for temporary greens, so it was necessary to keep some kind of turf on the greens.

We kept burning new growth until there was no danger of seed formation before the first frost. Then we went to work with sharpened garden rakes. Greens were cut as close as the mowers available in those days would cut. After spiking in two directions with the old saw-tooth Perfection spiker, they were seeded with a mixture of 50 per cent red top and 50 per cent South German mixed bent. Greens were top-dressed with the old-fashioned compost, rolled, and watered whenever necessary to keep the surface continuously moist. This was in late September. We had good luck with the seeding. Clover was gone. A lot of Poa annua came back and helped provide coverage that fall. The Maryland State Open was played over the course about mid-October. The greens looked like the good bent greens of today. We had many compliments. Players from Washington, D.C., must have mentioned the fact over there because Lyman Carrier came to see them and later the USGA had me go to New York and tell the story at their meeting in the Hotel Astor.

From then on we were able to control the crab grass by hand weeding. The different varieties of bent grass gradually took over. I could not begin to tell anyone what variety or how many there were. It has been a case of "survival of the fit-

test". Some of the coarse, grainy strains we have eliminated by plugging with fine strains from our nursery.

We encouraged the bents by light feedings often during the growing season, using sulfate of ammonia as the source of nitrogen, and applied ground limestone as a conditioner as often as we thought necessary. The *Poa annua* received very little feed in the cool weather of spring and fall.

Greens allowed to develop a thick mat or grain will eliminate *Poa annua* quicker than anything but they are not good putting greens, to my way of thinking.

*Poa annua* makes inroads when the turf is not healthy, from lack of good drainage, proper feeding, or too much organic top-dressing at the wrong time, especially in the fall months.

In our locality, bent seed from existing sources does not produce turf which keeps out *Poa annua* unless cut too high for good putting. Best results have been obtained by introducing some good varieties of stoloniferous bent by vegetative planting. We hold out on the *Poa annua* with fertilizer at the height of its season. We use steel brushes in front of the mowers, or a Parker Sweeper before cutting, then feed the bents a little and often during the growing season. I feed all summer using quite a bit of Milorganite or Agrinite about every three weeks. Spraying the *Poa annua* with sulfate of ammonia at 1/2 lb. per 1000 sq. ft. on a bright sunny morning during the flowering period has helped me. Greens should be watered after the burning of the surface vegetation has taken effect.

Spraying with sodium arsenite at the time of active growth, especially during flowering and seeding, is very good. Plugging in with good strains of bent which will stand close cutting is another big help. We changed bad greens to good ones in two years using the old hollow tine Roto-Con spiker. Small pieces of bent were inserted in the holes. Lately we have used the Aerifier to make the holes with good results. I have also used a 1 1/2 inch diameter by 2 inch deep plugger to replace clover and *Poa annua* with good bent from the nursery. Plugs are spaced 3 to 4 inches apart. The work is done during the off season and does not interfere with play.

In conclusion, I would say good strains of bent grass, good drainage, and proper feeding practices are a "must" in helping to control *Poa annua*. A new course in a virgin territory has little trouble, but as the years go by *Poa annua* seems to come out of nowhere, and if soil conditions are in its favor—rich in organic matter—it will soon take over. It is best to get a head start with the best bents for greens and the best grasses for fairways.



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