

Turfgrass Questions Answered

By FRED D. GRAU

THE RESPONSE to the Turfgrass Q and A has been gratifying. Many questions have been received and each one has been answered by mail. Many questions that came as a result of the August GOLFDOM have been selected for this month's column. In some cases there has been slight editorial revision of the question to increase the clarity but without changing the meaning.

It is a real pleasure to be able to answer the questions of those seeking factual information. In some cases we would be able to answer more exactly if we knew the kind of grass, the type of soil, the intensity of use and other specific information. Please include pertinent details with your questions.

Recent publicity on Merion bluegrass has brought many questions on this improved turfgrass. Even though you may not have questions to ask, your experiences with Merion will be welcome.

The tremendous development of new and improved warm-season grasses has created a new series of problems for many who previously have worked only with the cool-season grasses. The shift from cool-season feeding to fertilizing in the heat of summer has been a major change in recent years. The trend to close mowing has received added emphasis as we grow more of those grasses which virtually demand tight mowing.

New cool-season grasses are being developed and released for public use. Each grass will demand careful study so that its management requirements most nearly can be met. If, through this column, we can assist in minimizing mistakes in establishment and maintenance, our efforts shall have been worthwhile.

Q—What mixture of soil, sand and peat would you recommend for topdressing of creeping bent greens? (Ohio)

A—Extensive surveys have indicated that the 1-1-1 mixture of loam soil, coarse sand and peat is used more widely than any other. Where soils are heavy there is a definite trend toward a 1-2-1 mixture.

The sand should be as coarse as possible, even including fine gravel, just so that the largest particles do not interfere with the putting surface of the green. Well-rotted sawdust might be used in place of peat where this material is available. The clay content of the mixture should not exceed 8%-10% and the silt content should be less than 5% if possible. Topdressing high in silt invariably results in excessive compaction.

Q—How often should greens be mowed to maintain a good putting surface? (Illinois)

A—Every day.

Q—How often should cups be changed? (New York)

A—Where play is heavy cups should be changed every day. Where play is light the interval might be 2-3 days. Leaving a cup too long results in excessive compaction, puddling and weakening of the grass, encouraging invasion of poa and clover.

Q—At our club we have been discussing the question of how often to aerify. We have creeping bent greens, Bermuda tees and mixed bent-bluegrass fairways. (Michigan)

A—Creeping bent greens can be aerified once every 4-6 weeks as a regular practice. However, this activity should be confined to the season when the bent is growing actively so that the holes will heal rapidly.

Bermuda tees should be aerified once a month and again only during the active growing season. This schedule on both greens and tees can be followed because moisture control is possible.

On unwatered bent-bluegrass fairways the time of aerifying must coincide with proper moisture content to achieve maximum penetration and benefits. Aerifying twice in spring and twice in fall, the aerifications about a month apart, is considered sound practice on many courses. In some instances fairways are aerified every 4-6 weeks.

Q—We have been told that early morning hand-watering will help us reduce