

Turfgrass Questions Answered

By FRED V. GRAU

Dr. Grau will welcome questions on course maintenance subjects from superintendents, green chairmen, club and public course officials. There is no charge or obligation attached to this service. Address Queries — Grau, Golfdom, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill.

MODERN technical progress is so rapid, it is almost impossible to keep up with it. New chemicals, new machines and new grasses are introduced one after another in such quick succession, who can qualify as an expert in the use of them all?

The colleges and experiment stations cannot in a short time obtain accurate and complete information on the performance of all these new things. Research is slow and painstaking. Manufacturers make the best recommendations they can, but frequently they have only limited testing facilities, in only one location, under only one set of climatic conditions, and under one man's type of management.

Yet the golf course superintendent often is expected to become expert overnight in the handling of these new tools.

The Green Committee chairman or a member says: "I just read about a wonderful new chemical (or machine or grass) so why aren't we using it on our course?" When the product already is being marketed, the superintendent can't insist on waiting a year or more for research results. Still he is very hesitant to try out something new on his precious golf course. He knows how much time and effort have gone into producing the turf on the course and he does not want to risk new and unproved product or practice.

The superintendent must not be so conservative that he will never give any new thing a chance. Nor can he afford to be impulsive in his decisions about what goes on to the turf.

There is a middle road, and this is the one the wise superintendent follows. He is a pioneer, an experimenter, but he conducts his experiments on a limited scale.

Preferably he uses for a proving ground

a nursery maintained just like the greens, tees or fairways. When he hears about an improved grass, he plants a little in the nursery and watches how it develops under his management, and local soil and climatic conditions.

A new machine—he learns how to adjust it, how to use it on the nursery turf where mistakes can be made without inconveniencing anyone.

Activity of chemicals often is influenced by temperature and moisture; one grass is tolerant of a chemical, another may be extremely susceptible to injury. The nursery is the best place to learn these things. If no nursery turf is available, then the superintendent should conduct his experimental work on a limited area and where it will cause the least interference with play.

All of us learn best by doing. The superintendent is no exception. He cannot obtain all his knowledge from textbooks or conferences, valuable though these things are. There are so many variables in handling a living thing like turf, that some of our knowledge must be obtained through trial and error, observation and experience.

Officials and players should realize that experiments do not always produce good effects. This is no reflection on the superintendent's ability. There is no such thing as an unsuccessful experiment. We learn as much from the ones that produce bad effects as from the ones that turn out well. Learning what not to do is as valuable as learning what to do.

Attending conferences, reading books, discussions with other superintendents, asking questions—as in this column, all help to provide the background for intelligent experimentation, but they do not take the place of practical research on each individual golf course. Bad effects

are going to show up from time to time. Let's accept them as a necessary part of the progress which has made possible ever higher standards of perfection in golf course turf. They should not bring criticism of the golf course superintendent. Rather, he should be encouraged to continue his quest for greater knowledge.

Q—What is the best time of year to plant creeping bent stolons? (W. Va.)

A—In your area it will be best to plant creeping bent stolons during September. Spring planting is hazardous because of the competition of weeds, the handicap of insects and the possibility of hot, dry weather. In the fall we have cool nights and favorable moisture with less trouble from weeds and insects. Bentgrass is a cool season grass and grows best in cool weather.

Some of the most successful plantings of bent have been made in late fall when freezes occurred within a couple weeks so the ground was frozen until spring. Bent stolons are very hardy where frost is concerned.

Q—Could you suggest a reference book to help me find the answers to turfgrass problems? (Mont.)

A—"Turf Management" by H. B. Musser, published by McGraw-Hill Book Co., 330 W. 42nd St., New York 18. In it there is a great deal of valuable information on golf course maintenance. But you will not be able to turn to any one page and find all the answers. Some of the answers have been learned since the book was written.

Q—How much ground limestone should be mixed with topdressing to be applied to putting greens? (Conn.)

A—One 80 lb. bag of ground limestone for each 1000 sq. ft. would be a good application. You may expect better results if the green is well aerated before topdressing.

Q—Can 2,4-D be used to control clover on bent greens? (Ind.)

A—A mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, commonly called Brushkiller, can be used to control clover. I would be cautious when using it on bentgrass greens.

Begin with a very light rate, probably less than half of the recommended rate for bent fairways. Make some limited test applications to determine whether or not your bentgrass will be injured by the chemicals. Light applications of Brush-

killer will remove clover, but I repeat that it must be done very carefully and at light rates to avoid damage to the bentgrass.

After clover has been removed then you must follow good practices to develop a dense, vigorous turf; otherwise, clover will invade again.

Q—What is the best procedure for planting a green with Bermuda sprigs? (S. C.)

A—The method of planting sprigs on the putting green is quite similar to that used in planting bent stolons. The shredded sprigs are evenly spread over a prepared, well-limed, well-fertilized seedbed. Roll, topdress, roll again and keep adequately watered until the grass is well-established.

This method is particularly good with the newer finer types of Bermudas.

Q—What is the best type of fertilizer to use for Pennlu creeping bent? (Vt.)

A—Pennlu does not require any special type of fertilizer. In preparing the seedbed use a 10-10-10 (or similar) fertilizer, about 40 lbs. to each 1000 sq. ft.

After you start to mow, fertilization with $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. actual nitrogen to 1000 sq. ft. each month is needed.

This can be made by applying half that amount every two weeks. The fertilizer may be a good organic type or a soluble fertilizer. Either type will give good results if handled properly.

Q—What is the best way to get rid of chickweed in a green? (N. J.)

A—Chickweed in putting greens can be discouraged by applying arsenate of lead at 5 lbs. to 1000 sq. ft. at monthly intervals until you get results. This method is slow.

Quicker results can be obtained with sodium arsenite used at 1 lb. to 100 gals. of water to 1 acre (approximately 44,000 sq. ft.). Repeat every 7-10 days until satisfied. This will brown bent a little, but will not hurt it permanently.

A third method is to spray with the new di sodium methyl arsonate weed-killer. Use half rate or 11 lbs. of 31.5% material to the acre in 200 gals. of water. This is equivalent to 4 ozs. to 1000 sq. ft. Test it first in your nursery. Repeat in 7 days. A third application may be necessary.

Q—I've heard of shredding Bermuda stolons with a vertical mower. How do you go about this? (Ga.)

A—This method depends a little bit up-