

Grau Answers Turfgrass Questions

From many courses Dr. Fred V. Grau gets and answers the problems handled in this monthly department of GOLFDOM. Superintendents and club officials can avail themselves of this service without charge or obligation. Address your question to Grau Queries, GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago 5, Ill.

The year 1955 will be remembered by some who work with grass as a year of disastrous extremes of weather. And they have good reason to remember it that way. But from such a year we also learn things about grass that we would not discover if all years followed a blueprint.

To attain our goal of grass that is more and more satisfactory, we try to learn more about its physical nature and needs. As these things are learned, accurate information must be disseminated for use in the field.

There must be men in the field skilled in observation and procedures or they won't know how to use this information.

There must also be committee chairmen who are willing that the skilled supt. take the time to keep himself informed of the progress in turfgrasses and who will allow the supt. to use the superior grasses, tools and methods that research discovers.

The men in the field must keep the research workers informed as to what are current, practical problems. Research stations, in turn, must be alert and interested in the practical needs of the turf in use. It is a continuous circle of interdependent needs and services that has brought turfgrass management to the high standards it has attained.

The Golf Course Supts. Assn. is to be congratulated on its contributions all along the way. It sponsors the National Turfgrass Conference and Show which will be held this year at Long Beach. This is the 27th conference. More and more clubs and chairmen are making it possible for supts. to attend these annual meetings. It would be wonderful if more supts. could interest their chairmen in accompanying them.

I should like to turn the tables, so to speak, and ask a question myself. Drop me a post card, signed or unsigned, with a one word answer to this question:

Is your greatest single headache due to

soil, water, grass, chemicals, insects, disease, fungus, machinery, equipment, fertilizers, labor, golfers chairman committee members or budget?

Depending upon whom I last talked to, I get at one time or other the impression that each of these is the most serious headache, I omitted weather because there has been no practical progress in controlling it for our benefit.

Q — What grass would give us the best tees? The tees are not as large as we might wish and watering facilities are limited. (Wis.)

A — I believe Merion bluegrass will be your best bet because it takes less water than creeping bentgrass. It has deeper roots and will stand more wear and recover better from injuries. It will have to be fertilized every two weeks very much the same as you would fertilize your putting greens. I would suggest that you aerify every time you fertilize and use only enough water to keep the Merion from wilting. As we have stated before, the best way to establish Merion on a tee is first to grow it in a sod nursery for a year, then move the solid sod on to the tee.

Q — Would you outline to me the way in which you would advise a rank amateur to build a putting green. We have a heavy black soil, willing hands and no money. (Minn.)

A — First, send a representative sample of your soil to the Soils Department at you State Experiment Station, and ask what proportion of coarse sand by volume you must add to develop a sandy loam soil. Get a pH or lime test also and add dolomitic limestone to bring the pH to 6.5 or 7.0.

Prepare the sandy loam mixture in a convenient place off the site of the new green and haul it to the site after the base has been properly graded. You should have a total of 10 to 12 in. of prepared soil be-

fore settling. For 10 in. it will take 33 cu. yds. to each 1,000 sq. ft. Grade the base of the green so that there are no pockets to hold water. The center of the base should be the highest point so drainage water will move laterally out of the putting green area. This should largely eliminate the need for tile drains.

After placing the soil on the subgrade to a depth of 8 or 10 in., add another two inches of mixture to which peat or sawdust has been added in the proportion of 5 cu. yds. sandy loam to 1 cu. yd. of organic material plus 20 to 40 lbs. of 10-10-10 fertilizer, all thoroughly blended. Use the larger quantity of fertilizer with sawdust.

Now you are ready to contour the surface so that surface drainage will carry water away in at least two directions, with no pockets where water can stand. Do not spill all the surface water onto the approach. Create gentle contours which will permit easy maintenance. Thoroughly soak the green to promote settling and firming of the loose-packed soil. Finish grade with rakes and you are ready to plant.

The choice of the bentgrass is very important. From all available information it would seem that one of the best choices would be Pennlu creeping bent which is propagated from stolons. Sources of planting material may be found in the ads in GOLFDOM. Suppliers usually furnish detailed planting instructions. Keeping the stolons constantly moist, and starting to mow as soon as there is anything to cut, are cardinal principles. For details on maintenance consult your neighboring golf course superintendents.

Note: These are principles for your guidance. There are other methods of building greens, each capable of interpretation on the basis of local conditions.

Q — We plan to replace an old green with a new and large one. We want to use Seaside bent and I wonder if we should wait until spring to seed it. We have only a few frosts here. (Calif.)

A — It is not necessary to wait until spring. Seaside may be seeded any time the green is ready. However, Seaside tends to become increasingly troublesome over a period of time. Have you ever considered using a superior stolon bent? Pennlu, the latest, has been the best over a wide area. Stolons can be shipped in by air at a cost not greatly in excess of the cost of seed. Disease resistance and vigor and aggressiveness are the main features of Pennlu, plus a good dark green color and a splendid

putting surface. I suggest that you consult with Dr. Stoutemeyer or Dr. Youngner at UCLA as to the stolon bents which have consistently performed best in your area.

Q — We planted stolons of C-1 and C-19 shortly before winter set in. Should some treatment for snowmold be used on this new grass? (Utah)

A — You should need no snowmold treatments on newly planted bent stolons. The disease is very unlikely to attack until a green is a couple of years old. New grass tends to be healthy grass.

Q — Our bent greens are very slow to regain color in the spring. Is there any way we could make them green up more quickly? (Mont.)

A — Some strains of bent are very slow to regain color. Possibly you have Washington bent which tends to lose its color early in the fall and to be long delayed in becoming green in the spring. I suggest you try experimental plantings of Pennlu bent and Congressional (C-19). These two bents are noted for early greening and for holding color late in to the fall. C-19 is resistant to snowmold. Also, greens should be kept mowed closely late into the fall. A "top" on the green would discourage early spring greening.

Q — Could you identify the enclosed weed specimen and offer suggestions for controlling it? (Pa.)

A — The weed is pearlwort which is commonly found in bent putting greens and also is a lawn weed. The appearance in the two situations is quite different, mainly because of maintenance. Arsenicals seem to be a "specific" for pearlwort. Today you can choose from several types of arsenicals —

Lead arsenate — slow, mild, non-burning.
Sodium arsenite — rapid, drastic, burns foliage, turns grass brown too, temporarily.
Di-sodium methyl arsonate — an organic arsenical that works in a week to 10 days, is safe, rated as non-poisonous, and does not burn good grasses when properly used.

Q — What quantity of bent stolons should be used to plant a green? Is a nursegrass necessary? (N. M.)

A — Bent stolons for greens usually are planted at the rate of 5 to 10 bushels to 1000 sq. ft. The higher rate is used when speed of coverage is important and when the budget can stand it. The heavier covering does not dry out so easily which may