

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.

ONE of the most important decisions the golf course supt. has to make is the selection of the right grass for the right place, particularly on the putting green. In the "good old days" of greens seeded to fescue and Colonial bent the choice was small and failures were merely reseeded. Today, with several improved creeping bentgrasses to choose from, all of them vegetative and all of them better than Seaside (seeded) under most conditions, the choice becomes a problem requiring the greatest consideration because mistakes are far more costly. The right choice can mean great economy in the long run.

Today we have a great deal of scientific and performance evidence on what these various grasses will do. This department of GOLFDOM is receiving an increasing number of queries: "What grass should I plant on our new greens?"

There are several important considerations in choosing the right grass. Resistance to diseases ranks at the top in Musser's scale of values — and rightly so. From this standpoint Congressional bent would be the right choice in areas where snowmold is serious. Old Orchard also ranks high in this respect. Brownpatch is serious in areas where excessive moisture and high summer temperatures occur. It was in these areas that nature developed Washington, Arlington, Cohansey, and Pennlu bentgrasses, which are resistant to brownpatch. Dollar-spot is a minor disease, easily controlled with nitrogen fertilizer and selected chemicals. It is rarely considered in evaluating a grass. So far as we know there is no grass that can withstand pythium.

As demand for bent greens increases, we

find the bents moving deeper and deeper into the regions of extremely high summer temperatures. This puts a premium on heat resistance. In this class Cohansey, Seaside and Penncross are battling it out. Seaside is easiest to use because seed is available. There is no Penncross now, and only limited supplies are in sight for this fall. Cohansey stolons are not easily available. Many clubs in the desert areas do not care to go to the extra trouble of handling the vegetative material.

Toronto Requires Knowhow

Toronto bent has its champions in Chicago and in Canada where it is doing a remarkably good job. Those who have been most successful with it say that it takes more knowhow than some of the other strains. There are other grasses of local distinction that someday may outshine some of the present leaders. When this does happen, the course supt. should get credit for spotting and caring for these superior strains. Test plots, nurseries and the small trials that are being established on courses across the country are the proving grounds. No matter how accurate the data from research stations, a new grass can not be said to be wholly acceptable until it has undergone the acid test on the golf courses under many different types of conditions and management.

Regardless of who has responsibility for choosing grasses for a new course, it is wise to consult with the local supt. before making a final decision. Local experience may dictate a choice that won't appear in the text books until the next edition. The supt. is blamed for failure of inferior grasses which he never would have chosen in the first place. He can do only the best he can with what he is handed.

This department welcomes supts' com-

Selecting The Right Grass

ments on their successes and failures with various grasses as well as questions on choosing the right grass.

Q—Our bent greens have a poor winter color. What can we do to improve the color? (Va.)

A—Some bents naturally lose their good green color with freezing weather. Washington bent is one of the best examples but even strains with best late fall color become dull in weather that alternately freezes and thaws. About the only thing you can do is spray some green grass dye for quick relief. Grass that is fertilized adequately with nitrogen, balanced with P and K, will hold green color longer than hungry grass.

Q—Last summer we were forced to water our greens frequently to prevent wilting and loss of grass. The turf got quite thin and algae appeared, especially in low spots and where there was heavy traffic. Is the same thing likely to happen again? (Pa.)

A—Yes, particularly if you do not do something to improve drainage and aeration. The soil probably is compact and crusted. This excludes air (oxygen) from the roots. Water lies on the surface to cause "scald"

which further complicates the problem. Aeration, or cultivation, is of first importance. Deep placement of fertilizer will encourage heavier rooting. By improving the infiltration of water it will be possible to keep the surface drier. Algae can not grow when the grass is dry.

Q—We have heard that hydrated lime lightly dusted on greens will check algae. What can you tell us about this? (W.Va.)

A—Many authorities recommend, and supts. use, hydrated lime at 2 to 5-lbs. to 1,000 sq. ft. when algae appears. The lime tends to dry the surface quickly. The rapid change in pH also is believed to check the growth of algae. To apply the material in water as a spray does not seem to do the same amount of good. Mixing the hydrated lime with screened topdressing helps get it distributed uniformly. It is not necessary to water it in. Footprints may tend to cause slight burning. Late afternoon applications will help to minimize this.

Q—In applying green dye to warm-season grasses, is it best to wait until the grass is dormant and brown? We have heard that it sticks better if it is done while bermuda or zoysia still retains some of its natural

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