

Grau's Answers to Turfgrass Question

If you've got a question you want Dr. Fred V. Grau to answer, please address it to Grau Q&A, Golfdom, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago 5, Ill.



Before you set out to go someplace you had better know where you are starting from. This homely thought paraphrased from an admonition given to Glenn Burton of Tifton, Ga., by his father, might have been expressed with a little more regard to grammar but all of us know what it means. I had occasion to recall this bit of homespun philosophy recently as I was listening to testimony in Federal Court in a civil case involving property damage. The construction company involved made it a practice to send a skilled man in to survey the property before any construction was started. Detailed field notes were made which accurately located each tree, stream, fences, noted crops and their condition and probable yield, and the presence or absence of rocks. From these carefully preserved field notes, a report was prepared which became the standard reference regarding the particular property. Thus, regardless of the extent of future operations, they knew where they had started.

The quality of the initial survey and its obvious impression on the court and the opposing counsel, set me to wondering to what extent this approach has been used when a golf course supt. signs his contract and starts his new job. In talking it over with some of the supts. at various conferences, I decided it might be a good idea to bring the thought before readers of GOLFDOM. At the same time there came a letter in the mail from a young man who

is about to step up to a large course and heavier responsibilities. In my reply I urged him to make a complete and detailed survey and inventory of every facility for which he would be responsible. Even at the risk of being too basic, let's outline how this might be done, realizing that methods will change with various situations.

List All Equipment

Equipment would be first on my list. I would list each piece, note its condition and the need for repairs and replacement with a column for approximate cost. It would be a good idea, too, to carry a camera to record things that are unusual so that the committee will be able to view some of the things that are discovered.

Equipment needs good housing and repair facilities. Buildings and their arrangement should be noted with comments on changes for greater efficiency. What is the workshop like and how is it equipped for keeping machinery in operating condition? What are the facilities for the men so that they feel that their needs are recognized?

On the course, my first concern would be with the irrigation system. If a map is not available have one made at the first opportunity. Every outlet should be checked, along with water supply, pumps, hose and sprinklers. Anything unusual that might interfere with the smooth continuous operation of the system should be noted on the field record with recommendations for improvement and possible costs.

Now we are ready to inspect closely each turfgrass area, making detailed notes on kinds of grasses and in what amounts,

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the weeds that are there, the need for repair, renovation, resodding, sprigging, seeding and fertilizer requirements. Soil samples should be taken and sent to the laboratory. This is very important as a reference point in the future. Closely connected with this grass survey is the availability of nursery stock for repair and replacement. Opposite each item in the field notes should be entered the probable cost of the needed item. Included also would be the condition of the bunkers and other features of the course, the need for sand, repairs to the roads, tree care and replacement. Good pictures along the way can be a valuable asset in any discussion about "What was it like when I came here?"

Establishes Reference Point

This little discussion isn't intended to tell anyone how a survey should be conducted because each situation will be different. It has been presented to stimulate thinking in the direction of having a solid reference point in any future deliberations. When a budget is prepared the value of such an inventory will be demonstrated very clearly. There will arise the very important consideration of salary and, of course, raises. Good records are extremely important in the business side of the supt's profession. He will advance faster with good records than without them. The report which will be prepared from the field notes will become a permanent record in the files of the club and the supt.

So, when you are discussing the new position with the committee, make it clear that you consider it your first duty to make a complete and detailed survey and inventory of every facility for which you will be responsible. You should be able to sell the idea for certainly it is necessary for the intelligent preparation of a realistic budget. The survey will have many other practical uses, too.

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Q. Several years ago we started a putting green nursery of Penncross creeping bent from seed, according to your specifications. We are very much pleased with the nursery and our supt. feels it is the best grass for putting greens that he has ever come in contact with. But we have a question. Why is it when we take plugs of Penncross out of the nursery and set them into putting greens they are so slow in spreading? Is it something that we have done or haven't done? (N. Y.)

A. We are glad that the Penncross creeping bent seed has developed such fine turf and that you are pleased with it. We aren't

sure that the best way to use this grass is to plug it into existing greens except where there has been an injury and you need to make immediate repair. The grasses that you have in your greens at the present time are going to be highly resistant to invasion by another type of grass, and it may take several years before the newly set plugs of Penncross will begin to do any perceptible spreading. A far better way to use this grass would be to completely resod the greens with the sod from the nursery and then establish new sod in the nursery for another resodding job when it becomes necessary.

Another way to increase present Penncross sod area is to take the plugs from aerating, or the clippings from vertical mowing, and scatter them on newly prepared seed beds and let new turf develop from these. In that way you will be promoting those strains in the Penncross that have already proved themselves successful under your conditions.

Q. In some of your publications you recommend that common Kentucky bluegrass be mowed 1-1/2 ins. or higher. Then you say that Merion bluegrass will do better if cut 3/4 to 1 in. At other places you recommend a mixture of common bluegrass and Merion bluegrass. We are puzzled as to how we should mow a mixture of this kind, whether at the height to favor the common bluegrass or the height to favor the Merion. (Penn.)

A. The answer here is: "Effect a reasonable compromise". The lower cut is designed for Merion bluegrass grown in pure stand adequately fertilized and managed according to the needs of Merion. The higher cut is designed to help common Kentucky bluegrass overcome some of its weaknesses. However, when the two are in combination a compromise in mowing heights is perfectly logical. Actually, the level of fertility is as important as the mowing height. If the level of fertility is kept high you will find that both grasses will do well at medium height.

Q. What is the most effective chemical that you know of that will help kill *Poa annua* in Seaside Bent Greens? (N.M.)

A. To date, the most effective chemical to help reduce *Poa annua* in Bent Greens is arsenic. Arsenic may be applied either as sodium arsenite or as lead arsenate. Lead arsenate is easier and safer to use. It consists primarily in applying 10 lbs. of arsenate of lead to 1,000 sq. ft. spring and fall during the cool season and continuing the applications until you get results.

Sodium arsenite is best applied as a spray using a liquid preparation. A safe way would be from one 1/2 to 3/4 ozs. per 1,000 sq. ft. used every 10 days to two weeks during a cool season when *Poa annua* is active. It also may be applied by using slightly higher rates, perhaps up to 1 oz. per 1,000 sq. ft. mixed with sand or dry topdressing as a carrier. Frequency of application is the same as for spray.

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