

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.



LAST month we talked about the county agent, the public benefactor who works with farmers and suburbanites. This month we shall discuss the "Subject Matter Specialist" who backs up the county agent information on his particular subject.

Each state extension service maintains

How the State Extension Specialist Can Help You

at headquarters a staff of highly-trained people who are specialists in their subject. They work with and through the office of the county agent, usually at his request, to bring the latest information to interested taxpayers through meetings, the press, radio and TV, and through timely releases (bulletins, pamphlets, etc.). This program is financed by appropriated state and Federal tax funds.

The creation of a position of extension specialist usually results from requests from taxpayers. This was true in my case when, in 1935, I received my appointment at Penn State. Joe Valentine and Marshall Farnham, among others, prevailed upon a Mr. McDowell, then director of extension, for the appointment, supported by reasons to justify the expense.

Extension specialists cover virtually every phase of agriculture. Turfgrass groups are entitled to the services just as farm organizations are. Creation of the position and the scheduling of services are obtained by requests from leaders of groups to the county agent. In no case is there any charge for services.

Just what lines of work are covered by the specialists? Let us examine the possi-

bilities in some of the subjects which might be of value to turfgrass groups.

Agronomy: There may be specialists in hay and pasture, hybrid corn, turf. There seems to be no uniform policy. The turf man may be in agronomy or in horticulture. It varies in different states.

Horticulture: Specialists may be available in greenhouse work, fruits and vegetables, flowers or in trees and shrubs. The wide variety of interests in this department, together with an equally wide variety of interests among turf men, makes this an exceedingly good possibility for assistance from specialists.

Agricultural Engineering: Among the many services offered here are drainage of soils, operation of engines and machinery, and running grade levels.

Forestry: Almost all turfgrass areas have need for trees and information on how to care for them.

Entomology: The insect problem will be with us always, presenting new problems yearly.

Pathology: Diseases of grasses, shrubs and trees are among our most costly threats.

I could go on naming many other departments (accounting, business administration, public speaking) — all available for the asking at no cost. Only a few specialists know turf but that is not necessary. The important thing is that they have information that any groups need plus willingness and the ability to present it clearly.

If your group lacks speakers for meetings ask your county agent for help. One of the extension specialists from a college might be the answer. Please do not expect a new man to understand fully all your

Satan and John Doe

Old Satan sat with face so grim
And muttered "What'll I do with him?"
He's sure to find this place a bore
With the life on earth he's had before!"
And then while shaking his horny head
He opened his ledger and this he read:
"John Doe — Keeper of Greens,
A man behind the golfing scenes,
Had sixty years of toil and strife
Pleasing golfer, manager, pro, and wife.
His job included keeping the greens,
Planting new turf, repairing machines.
Fighting diseases, insects defeat;
Battling rain, humidity, heat.
Fixing waterpipes that break through
the ground,
Changing all markers and mowing
weeds down.
He worked all the day — studied at
night,
Trained all new men in ways that were
right.
Knew the diseases; chemicals, too.
Fertilized, aerified, 'til his face would
turn blue.

Not only scholar and teacher was he,
But an ambassador of good will — and
publicity.
Records he kept; watched budget allo-
cation —
On him depended the course reputation,
And though heading a project whose
value was high,
Credit and praise went to some other
guy.
Gripping and moaning he got every day
But seldom a raise in the old take-
home pay!"
Now here he lies, his days they are
through —
"Tell me," said Satan "What'n hell can
I put him to?"
After sitting and thinking for quite a
while
His face broke out in a great big smile;
The best known hardship he could deem
Was to send him where all was calm
and green!

Helen May

problems the first time you meet with him. He will need time to become acclimated to the special needs of your group just as you needed time to become accustomed to your new job.

If your state lacks a turfgrass specialist, and you feel that there is a real need for one, ask for one. See your county agent and have him arrange an appointment with the director of extension. The first reaction usually is negative. But, when supported by an estimate of the number of taxpayers interested and a reasonable figure on the investment in turf, requests are being granted in more and more states.

For Strong Organization

Q. In our part of the state we have an organization of sorts but we don't seem to be getting anywhere. Our occasional meetings lack purpose in spite of the apparent need for information on everything pertaining to growing grass. Can you suggest anything whereby we might develop an active turfgrass group? (Va.)

A. There are some good examples of "self help" where interested individuals sought assistance and proceeded to organize a turf-

grass association. One of the first to do this — if not the first — was the group in the Pocono Mountains who still operate the Pocono Turf Association. That was in 1935-36.

One of the more recent highly successful efforts has been the development of the Delaware Valley Turfgrass Association which embraces five counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. The way in which this group came into existence is outlined in a booklet entitled "Organizing and Conducting A Turfgrass Association" which has been sponsored by the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council.

For further information on the subject and availability of the booklets write to Tom Mascaro, secy.-treas., Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, West Point, Pa.

Wants Turfgrass Literature

Q. I am 22 years old, have just served three years in the Army and am now working on a course. I am very happy with this type of work. I would like to go to turf school.

My stepfather is chmn. of the green committee at the course where I work. He receives GOLFDOM every month and I have been an avid reader of your articles in the Question and Answer section and also have read your "Golf is Played on Grass" in the Agricultural Yearbook.

I would appreciate any advice you may

offer as to how I may obtain information in regards to literature on grass as it is grown and maintained on courses. I would also like to have a source of information regarding turf schools. (Md.)

A. We are glad that you are happy with your work on the golf course. The profession needs more men like you. One outstanding book is "Turf Management" by H. B. Musser, available in your bookstore or from McGraw-Hill Book Co. in New York. Naturally, GOLF-DOOM and the Golf Course Reporter are two important current periodicals containing much useful information on the subject. If at all possible, you should receive Turfgrass Conference Reports or make arrangements with someone to study their copies. As you attend conferences and register, you automatically will receive the Turf Conference Reports.

A rather complete bibliography of turfgrass literature and other excellent reading material for students of turf soon will be published and the announcement will be made through these columns as well as through News of the "Blue Chip" Turf World published at Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Regarding schools, I have sent you, under separate cover, a brochure from the Pennsylvania State University, giving you the information on their short course which will be activated in the Fall of 1957. I advise you to study the brochure and make application for the short course.

Soil Test

Q. How can I go about having my soil tested to find out what it needs? (Ga.)

A. Dr. Carter, speaking before the turfgrass conference at Tifton, said that people of Georgia are entitled to a free soil test. The first step is to see your county agent. Since you grow grass (a crop) you qualify as a farmer. There are four locations to which samples may be sent — Athens, Griffin, Blairsville and Tifton. Every County Agent has soil sample bags and information sheets. The background history on each sample helps greatly in interpreting results.

Soil Testing Kit

Q. Could you please tell me where I could purchase a soil testing kit and a tissue testing kit? It doesn't have to be an expensive one, but at the same time I don't want a real small one — I'd say about in the middle bracket. I used to have a very small one and it came in handy at times. I would like to get a complete set. I have been taking care of golf courses, also building courses since 1924. Most of my work has been in the region from St. Louis to Oklahoma, yet I have a lot to find out. I've had experience with Washington Bent, Metropolitan Bent Seaside and now I'm working with Cohansey C-7 Bent.

A. I would suggest that you write to W. H. Daniel, Purdue University, West Lafayette,

Indiana and inquire about soil test kits and tissue test kits. Also, I would contact Roger Bray, University of Illinois, Urbana. They have had a great deal of experience with both of these kits in Illinois.

Some time ago a tissue testing kit was produced by West Point Products Corp., West Point, Pennsylvania. You might write to them and inquire about its availability.

It may pay you to inquire closely into the soil testing and tissue testing services that you might have available to you in the states in which you are operating. Sometimes it is just a little bit easier and perhaps more accurate to have the work done in a control laboratory where all the chemicals are fresh and where the workers are skilled and are not being distracted by other things. Soil testing service is now more readily available than it has been at any time in the past.

Destroying Seedheads

Q. We have a Pennlu nursery and I was wondering what chemical is the most effective on the seedheads.

A. To my knowledge there hasn't been very much work done on this subject but I will give you the benefit of our own experience. In our Pennlu nursery at the Farm near State College, Pennsylvania, we let the Pennlu throw seedheads and come to bloom. We know it will take at least three weeks from the time of blooming until mature seeds are set. Therefore, just as soon as the heads are blooming, we spray the field with Brush Killer (Mixture of 2-4D and 2-45T) and sodium arsenite, using a pint of Brush Killer to the acre and two pounds of sodium arsenite to the acre in about 100 gals. of water.

This seems to do a very effective job of preventing the seedheads from forming seed. We repeat the application in about ten days to be sure we catch any late blooming seedheads so they do not produce seed.

You will note that the seedheads turn brown and shrivel and are completely incapable of producing any mature seed when hit with this combination. It does practically no damage to the bent, particularly if it is in a healthy growing condition and the soil is moist, so that there is good growth.

There possibly may be better methods of stopping seed production in Pennlu nurseries.

Fertilizer Consumption

Consumption of fertilizer in the U. S. increased nearly 70 per cent between 1945 and 1955, according to information recently released by the Ohio Farmer, Pennsylvania Farmer and Michigan Farmer. In 1945, about 13 million tons were used as compared to 22 million tons 10 years later. Nebraska showed the biggest increase, raising its consumption 65 times over what it had been in 1945. Several states listed increases ranging from 155 to nearly 2,000 per cent.