

Grau's Answers to Turf Questions



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.

Practice vs. Proved Principles

A SUBJECT frequently assigned to after-dinner speakers is that of tracing the pattern of progress in some particular field. The writer has been asked to do this in August before the joint Chairman-Supt. meeting sponsored by the Philadelphia Golf Assn. We welcome the opportunity to compare the way we used to do things with the way we do them now (or at least the way we would like to do them now). Based upon current observations, it seems that practice has not always conformed to proved principles.

Principle 1: Putting green turf is easier to maintain when, during construction, all ingredients have been thoroughly blended to provide uniform conditions for plant growth. Practice: Greens are being built that must be rebuilt before being put into play because the ingredients (sand, organic matter, soil) are so non-uniform and so poorly mixed that satisfactory turf for play can't be developed or maintained.

Principle 2: Surface drainage that carries excess water off the green in at least two or three different directions make maintenance much easier and need not affect playing character. Practice: Too many newly-built greens are like saucers tipped toward the fairway. Surface water is dumped into the approach area making it nearly impossible to maintain good turf on either green or approach. Principle 3:

Improved grasses exist that are known to provide superior turf with less disease and trouble and with fewer maintenance headaches. Practice: Many turf areas on new courses are being planted with poorly-adapted grasses which will cause major maintenance headaches. Some eventually will have to be replanted with improved types.

Principle 4: Proper levels of nutrients for the various grasses have been proved for the several uses of grasses. Practice: Everywhere we see starvation causing emergency expenditures which exceed original cost of the balanced diet that should have been provided in the first place to render such expenditures unnecessary.

Principle 5: Sharp mowers make all turf look better and stay healthier. Practice: Everywhere we see sad looking turf — on courses, athletic fields, home lawns, even experiment station plots — where even the best grasses and the best fertilizers have no chance to show to advantage under the dull mantle of chewed, frayed grass blades.

These are but a few of the pet peeves we have developed as a result of the pattern of progress failing to relate practice to proved principles. We hope that every new golf club, before it signs a contract, will make very certain that it has the very best recommendations of agronomists and



Grau Photo
Fertilizer burn on turf aggravated by type of spreader that released material in stream. Goosegrass and crabgrass replaced turf that was killed.

supts. on grasses, contours, drainage and other factors that influence maintenance. Good architectural design can be achieved that recognizes the proved principles underlying plant growth without sacrificing one iota of character.

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Maintaining Tifton 328

Q. We put in Tifton 328 in August, 1957. The growth has been fine and we have as good greens as any in the area. I am wondering about how much water the greens will require to main-