

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.

*Be not the first by which the new is tried
Nor be the last to lay the old aside.*

WITH all proper respect for the true meaning of this advice, these words applied too strictly say, in effect, "Be mediocre" or "Wait until someone else has tried it and see if it works" or "Don't pioneer".

If everyone followed this old maxim to the letter no one ever would try anything new. Robert Fulton, Ben Franklin, the Wright Brothers and other pioneers wouldn't have made their marks if they had taken this advice.

The turfgrass profession is young and lusty. Opportunities to try new things are at every hand. We commend the green chmn. and committees who encourage their supts. to try new things.

Hand in hand with trying new things goes understanding — also accuracy.

The new "tool" should be understood as to its advantages, limitations and properties. When it is used it should receive skillful, accurate handling so that its merits truly can be evaluated.

New things are presented at turfgrass conferences, national, regional, state and local. For this reason, among others, supts. and chmn. have been urged to attend conferences for educational purposes. (The best informed men in the country

present their ideas at these meetings.) Besides this, "corridor councils" bring out so many new ideas that can be tested.

If everyone at a club is kept informed of what goes on at turf conferences, a major hurdle will have been surmounted. A supt. has the privilege of keeping abreast through professional meetings and conferences. This privilege carries with it a responsibility to report new findings to others in management at the club.

Last, but not least, findings of interest to club members should be passed on to them in condensed form so that they, too, can keep abreast.

Q. Why are 100 lbs. of ground charcoal used per 1,000 sq. ft. on putting green surfaces? (Ky.)

A. It is assumed that the ground charcoal is being spread on the green surfaces in an effort to sweeten the soil and relieve compaction. Actually, ground charcoal does very little good for either of these ailments. It would do a great deal more good to thoroughly aerate the greens and topdress with a sandy loam topdressing. We haven't heard of charcoal being used on putting greens for many years.

Q. Is Cohansey practicable for growth on courses in northeast Oklahoma? (Okla.)

A. Yes, Cohansey (C-7) creeping bent is one of the best for putting greens on courses in Oklahoma and many other states. It is a vigorous grass that holds color well throughout the entire growing season, is quite highly disease resistant and, most important of all, highly heat resistant. Some of the most perfect greens in U. S. are of Cohansey bent and they are in Oklahoma.

Q. I am confused about eliminating thatch on greens. I have been led to believe, through reading various articles, never to topdress over a thatched condition as it creates layers. Now, in GOLFDOM, we read, "Topdressing of greens will aid materially in decomposing thatch accumulations". Has the trend of thought shifted? (N. Y.)

A. There is a difference between the old concept of topdressing with a very heavy layer and the more modern concept of topdressing with a very thin layer, which actually isn't a very thin layer but is so well worked in that it settles down and almost becomes a part of the turf itself. Thus it greatly stimulates development of organisms which help to reduce thatch accumulations by digesting them. It is quite true that a heavy topdressing over a badly thatched condition will definitely create layers. Since the principle of aeration combing, brushing and vertical mowing has been established, thatch and mat accumulations now are much less serious. By reducing thatch mechanically, before applying a light topdressing, bacterial decomposition of the organic material greatly is accelerated. I don't believe the trend of thought on this issue has

shifted — it is simply a matter of interpretation.

Q. We have an experimental green at our course of Tiffine (127) Bermuda, which has done very well. We'd like to know what grass seed to use and what procedure of sowing to keep it green in the winter. We'd also like to know what grass you consider as the best of the Bermudas for greens. Could it be Uganda-grass? (Mo.)

A. We're pleased to hear of your success with Tiffine Bermuda. In general, this grass has been somewhat difficult to manage in producing a smooth, true putting surface. Please give us your management procedure so we may pass it on to others who have greens of this particular grass.

In your area, it may not be possible to keep any grass green through the winter without dye or paint. Cold weather can knock the color out of almost any grass. Usually, for keeping a Bermuda green in color during the winter, ryegrass is used. In some cases a chewing fescue could be added to the ryegrass. Fescue seems to maintain a very good color through the winter, particularly the first winter after it has been sown. Some use bentgrass, but this is difficult to establish and does not hold its color well in a cold winter. Others use bluegrass and redtop. These two can be tinged with brown in sharp frost and may not stay as green as you would like.

We wouldn't say Ugandagrass is the last word in grass for greens. In more southerly parts, Tifton 328 or Tifgreen Bermuda is being used rather extensively. Ugandagrass has been doing an excellent job in a number of areas further north where Tifgreen has not been tested widely. Points in favor of Ugandagrass are that it is as fine or finer than bent, it is virtually without grain when properly managed and the seed-heads, what few there are, stand straight up so that the mower cuts them off cleanly. It requires only a minimum of irrigation and holds excellent color when adequately fertilized. Tifgreen also has excellent color and, like Uganda, starts rapidly and covers quickly and produces a putting surface of medium texture somewhat like Tiffine, but a little bit finer. Both grasses are vigorous and highly disease resistant.

I'd first establish experimental areas in comparison with your present satisfactory Tiffine.

Q. For the last two years I have been Pres. of a Pa. country club and I have read every GOLFDOM article of yours, particularly when it refers to Merion bluegrass. I have had a Merion bluegrass lawn for the past two years. My grass has a disease not described in any literature I have seen on Merion bluegrass.

This disease started under some red gum trees last year and thinking it may have been caused by the trees. I did not take action until fall. The disease is white (possibly fungus) that appears on the grass leaf as a powder and re-

(Continued on page 70)

Extra tough! U. S. DRIVING RANGE BALLS!



in colored stripes



and new built-in
YELLOW!

U. S. Driving Range Balls have been acclaimed all over the country as the *best* range balls on the market. They're made *just* for driving ranges. Extra-tough, they take everything in stride—fight off scrapes and cuts. Offer plenty of playability plus durability. Come in a choice of colored stripes—or the new all-yellow ball. The yellow color is built-in—all the way through. Can't wear off. This "high-visibility" yellow makes it much easier to find. Cuts down on pilferage, too. Ask your U. S. Sales Representative to show you the complete line of U. S. Driving Range Balls!



United States Rubber

Rockefeller Center, New York 20, N. Y.

A
GREAT MATCH!

RAIN BIRD & NELSON

The Champions in Turf
Irrigation Equipment



RAIN BIRD TURF SPRINKLER MODEL 808

- One of the really great combinations in the turf irrigation field, Rain Bird and Nelson combine to give you unsurpassed watering capacity with economy and efficiency of operation.
- Rain Bird Sprinklers provide maximum, penetrating coverage over large turf areas, and are available to cover any part of a circle, or full circle. As part circle they water the grass, shrubbery, trees *without* soaking walks, drives or buildings. Perfection of operation... ease of maintenance are assured by a minimum of moving parts.
- Together, Rain Bird and Nelson offer you the most complete line of turf valves. Both, Nelson Quick Coupling Valves and Rain Bird Sure-Quick Turf Valves, are self-closing, foolproof, and afford fast, positive coupling and uncoupling without tools. Top flush with turf, they maintain landscape beauty... eliminate hazard to moving equipment and persons walking or playing.



NELSON MIDJET VALVE
MODEL 30A

IMPORTANT!

Nelson and Rain Bird valves and sprinklers save time and labor... cut your operating cost substantially.

Write for literature on the most complete line of valves and sprinklers, and see how easily... how completely your turf irrigation requirements can be satisfied.

NATIONAL RAIN BIRD SALES
& ENGINEERING CORP.

Azusa, California

RAINY SPRINKLER SALES

609 West Lake Street, Peoria, Illinois

sults in lack of color in the leaf in spots — the color being whitish-yellow although very much of a white. In September the disease seemed to increase. White powder would rise from the grass and be deposited on your shoes, the same as if it were lime. By October this disease had spread all over the yard and in the areas where it first appeared, the grass turned brown and seemed to disappear.

This disease apparently does not affect other grasses in the neighborhood since they do not have any white coating or color. I have tried two applications of Tersan with apparently no results. I hope you will be able to help me since I am rapidly losing a very fine Merion lawn. (Pa.)

A. From your very good description it seems as though the Merion was affected by powdery mildew. This, however, you should determine definitely. I suggest that you have your county agent send specimens of your grass to the Department of Botany, Dr. Couch, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. Ask for positive identification of the disease.

It would help if you would describe fertilizer and water treatments that your Merion lawn has received during the past two years. It would help, also, if you would describe your mowing practices: how often you mow, at what height and whether or not you remove clippings.

There are many fine Merion bluegrass lawns in your area that apparently are completely free of the trouble you describe. I cannot believe that the disease, or the trouble, is so serious as to cause the Merion to disappear. There must be contributing factors and your self analysis of your management practices will help to diagnose the trouble.

Q. Can you help me determine the reason for the lack of use of creeping bent stolons in the Southern California area? I have failed to come up with a satisfactory answer. Out here, everything seems to be Seaside seeded bent. (Calif.)

A. Seaside bent seed is convenient and it's cheap. Bentgrass stolons are somewhat more expensive and have not been made available to any degree in Southern California. Although they have been proven in research plots, they haven't been accepted in the general sense of the word. They entail considerable work in planting and in care. Another thing is that favorable climate permits Seaside to develop turf that is quite satisfactory under good management. Dry air and relatively uniform temperatures represent quite a different condition than in the Midwest, where only the sturdiest creeping bents can stand up under the rigorous Iowa climate.

As of now, with Penncross creeping bent seed available in quantity and at a reasonable price, many of the new courses in your area, and elsewhere over the country probably will have greens seeded to this superior creeping bent seed.