

# 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-

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