

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.

Quo Vadis is a term familiar to every first-year Latin student. It is a term that suddenly has assumed great significance in the turfgrass profession. It will be a big factor in committee deliberations. Several translations are possible. "Whither goest thou?" is the classic interpretation. We might ask the question, "What goal have you established?" or "What level of quality do you want?"

It was evident at the GCSA conference in Washington, D. C. that often there exists a wide discrepancy between the quality of the turf that the supt. tries to provide, on the basis of what he believes club members want, and the funds that are provided for the purpose. The most common source of discontent seemed to be the demand for "economy" on the course to permit the expenditure of large sums in the clubhouse.

This seems to be the right place and the right time for a frank statement. The members of a club have a perfect right to demand any given level of quality in any department of the club if they're willing to pay for it — who shall say nay? If they are perfectly content with mediocre turf why shouldn't they have it?

But — and this is important — the supt. has an equal right to request, in writing, a statement of the level of quality that is desired. It is senseless for the supt. to eat his heart out — trying to provide opti-

mum quality when the budget and members ask only minimum quality. A cut in the budget may simply be another way of telling the supt. that they really do not care too much if the greens go to pot. If the members say, "We want nothing but the best," the supt. then has a free hand to draw up a budget that will provide optimum quality.

In developing a budget the supt. must provide unerringly for those items which are designed to produce the highest quality in turf. He must know costs and must be prepared to defend the selection of items which he knows will aid him most in achieving the goal agreed upon. Some items may be unfamiliar to committee members. Education of these people then becomes the first order of business. Some supts. are disheartened when the material which they have chosen to aid them in achieving desired quality is not allowed and they are told to buy a "cheaper" material which the supt. knows will ultimately be more costly to the club. The committee has a perfect right to enforce such a demand upon the supt. The supt. has an equal right to set forth in writing all facts at his command to prove that his choice would be the wise one.

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Q. Kindly advise what is the best application on greens containing Astoria colonial and seaside bent for removal of chickweed which is coming in more heavily all the time.

(New York)

A. I would recommend use of lead arsenate which can be a very effective material against chickweed in mixed bent greens. Lead arsenate is safe and, if used at the rate of 10 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. once a year, either spring or fall, should get rid of chickweed gradually and safely.

If there are stubborn spots that you'd like to get rid of quickly, dust them with calcium arsenate. This material is a little more active than lead arsenate and will cause chickweed to disappear more rapidly. But it also does a little more damage to the grass if used too heavily.

Control of disease is very important in keeping the turf healthy and resistant to invasion of weeds. Your fertilization program also is extremely important as well as the irrigation. Well fed turf, with minimum irrigation, is a good defense against weed invasion.

Q. I am supt. at a club in Washington. We have a problem involving one of our greens in that the poa annua type grass does not survive summer heat and fungus damage.

We are interested in obtaining a type of bent which will be most adaptable to our climate and conditions. Our plan is to kill all existing plant life, spike as much as 20 times and then topdress and replant with a suitable strain of

bent. We do not wish to change the topography of the green and want to have it playable as soon as possible. (Wash.)

A. Your problem indicates that something is radically wrong either with your soil or with the sub-drainage, perhaps both. With low humidity and low rainfall during the hot months you should be able to control poa annua principally through water control. So, before you go to a lot of expense and time and trouble, look into the way the green is built. If you do not correct the basic faults you will have it all to do over again.

After you have corrected soil and drainage and perhaps a matted condition of the turf plant Penncross seed, at one lb. to 1,000 sq. ft. Take a cheek on the soil to learn what you need in the way of minerals. Your Soils dept. at Pullman can help you. You may be able to get a Soils man to examine the green with you and analyze the situation. Read past Q. and A's for discussions on soil mixtures for greens.

Q. We use Calo-Clor each Fall just before the first snow, but we always have considerable snowmold kill on our course. What is the best way to restore our turf to its best condition for play? Snows are heavy each year. We often have one to two ft. of snow on the greens and up to three feet on the fairways in April. (Minn.)

A. One of the best ways to restore snowmold damaged turf is to open it by spiking or other type of aerating to get air into the soil and permit the grass to restore its growth. Probably not all of it will come back, but frequently, annual bluegrass fills in the voids and can be quite a blessing at times in this respect. Spiking or aerating can be helpful, too, if additional seeding is necessary to restore turf to those areas that do not heal by themselves.

I would like to consider, for a moment, the rate of Calo-Clor you use. Perhaps you are not using enough. It may be likely, also, that you could afford to use it twice in the fall to obtain better protection. Another possibility is that the grass you have is highly susceptible to snowmold. If you have to plant grass where it has been damaged by snowmold, you might consider using Congressional (C-19) creeping bent grass which is highly resistant to snow mold.

Certainly you want to avoid late fall fertilization with a soluble fertilizer that causes grass to go into winter in a soft, succulent condition, making it more susceptible to the disease.

It would be helpful if you could get pictures of snowmold damage this spring and let me have a copy for my files.

Q. What is the best sand to use for topdressing? We have been using pea-size gravel but don't seem to get it worked down into the soil. I am wondering if a real coarse sand would be better. (Kan.)

A. Pea-size gravel is best used in the sub-grade or in preparation of the putting green, but certainly not for topdressing. You would be much better off using a coarse sand which

would work into the turf and into the soil following aerating. When pea-size gravel is used for topdressing there usually are too many complaints from golfers because the ball is deflected by pebbles. One way pebbles can be taken off the green easily and quickly is with a curved snow shovel which is used to windrow the material for easy removal.

Q. We have sand greens on our 9-hole course. We'd like to experiment with grass. Would it be possible to give us an estimate of the care they need and the expense involved? Also, we'd like to have information on how the soil should be prepared, chemicals needed, watering and fertilization. (Iowa)

A. It is impossible to give exact answers to your questions without seeing the property and taking into account all features including water supply and many other factors.

I suggest that you get in touch with Professor H. L. Lantz, Dept. of Horticulture, Iowa State College, Ames, and have him help determine the answers to your questions. It is entirely possible you may not be in a position to attempt grass successfully as yet. On the other hand, you may be admirably located for it. Only a first-hand inspection of your course would reveal this.

Stewart Heads Midwest

New pres. of the Midwest GCSA is Ed Stewart, supt. at River Forest CC in Elmhurst, Ill. Vps are Peter Bild and Dave Mastroleo. Adolph Bertucci is secy-treas. and directors are: Walter Fuchs, Norm Kramer, Dom Grotti, Amos Lapp, Wes Updegraff and Ben Krone.

New England Picks Francis

Manuel Francis of Vesper CC, Lowell, Mass. has been elected pres. of the New England GCSA for 1958. Albert Allen, Paul O'Leary and N. J. Sperandio are vps. Secy. is William Ash and treas., Arthur Cody. Theodore Swanson was elected three-year trustee. Education committee chmn. is Ray Brigham; Milton Brown heads the golf committee; and Howard Farrant and John O'Connor are co-chmn. of the auditing committee. Phillip I. Caddidy is business mgr. of the New England group.

Kansans Elect Funk

Kansas Turfgrass Assn. members recently elected Bob Funk pres. He succeeds E. R. Queen. Other officers are Ed Nelson, vp, and Bob Lester, secy.-treas. Directors are Tom Andrews, Charles Nelson and Joe Holub. Committees are headed by the following: Publicity, Lynn Burris; Program, Tom Andrews; and Membership, Ervin Syfert. Ross McCausland, Jr. is the organization's photographer.