

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.

Test Nurseries — Test Plots Trial Gardens

Call them what you will . . . "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." The name need not limit the usefulness of the area set aside for testing products designed to improve turf quality. Every course needs a generous area of turf where the supt. can make mistakes — calculated mistakes. On the course mistakes can be costly, even disastrous. Nature being what she is, we can always expect the unexpected which may cause loss of turf in greater or lesser degree. A well planned and well conducted nursery can minimize troubles on the areas under play by deliberately creating and correcting difficulties.

Probably the first comparison most clubs will want to make is that of the grass they now have on the greens with a new kind that has been represented as being superior. Such a test should be conducted so that each grass is managed according to its own needs. We have seen superior grasses fail miserably in test plots where they were being managed according to the needs (real or fancied) of some other grass. Some of the contrasting treatments that should be studied are:

- Overwatering vs. minimum watering
- Heavy vs. light nitrogen feeding
- Disease treatments only when needed vs. regular preventive disease treatments

Others may be studied as space, time, money and desire dictate or permit. It is not how much is done that counts but how much is well done. Whatever study is started, it needs to be given time and attention to develop maximum information before the area is discarded, replanted or converted to another test. A case in point has to do with Old Orchard creeping bent. We have observed, and have been told by others, that Old Orchard tends to thin out in mid-summer and let poa annua invade. This seems to be its only weakness. In all other respects it has high quality. Recently we inspected Old Orchard bent under a set of treatments where it retained excellent density throughout the summer with not the slightest sign of thinning and without a trace of poa. Its needs were being met. We were so impressed that we called Ralph Bond and told him about it so he could pass the information along to Old Orchard users.

We have seen a number of tests on course nurseries which compared Seaside to Pennecross, both seeded. In most cases Pennecross outperformed Seaside at every turn. The contrast is most striking at high fertility (N) levels with minimum irriga-



Grau Photo

Plugs for patching at Portage, CC, Akron, O.

tion and with minimum disease treatments. Paul Addressi at Tamarisk CC, Palm Springs has an excellent test nursery in which Pennecross is outstanding compared to Seaside. As a result of testing Paul has conducted, he now is successfully seeding Pennecross into Seaside greens. The tests gave him confidence to choose and proceed with the program that is improving the already excellent turf.

What started out to be a small test

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nursery of U-3 bermuda at Five Farms, Baltimore, Md., under Bob Scott (retired) now has become the production nursery from which planting material will be taken by Frank Dunlap to plant all the tees on the new 9 and all fairways on the course. Before such a program could be launched there had to be the knowledge that it worked and worked at Five Farms!

Alex Repin's nursery at Tulsa CC told him that Cohansey (C-7) bent was worth trying on a regular green. No. 7 green was planted and managed to suit Cohansey! The results can be seen on many courses in the Southwest, very few of which had test plots of their own. They drew strength from Alex Repin's success and suggestions on maintenance.

Pine Valley's nurseries are the most extensive in the world, so far as we know. Eberhardt Steiniger spends a great deal of time and effort on them and derives from his studies valuable information that can be obtained nowhere else. No experiment station has sand such as Pine Valley has. Therefore, to know whether a grass, a fertilizer, or a tool will work at Pine Valley it must be tried at Pine Valley.

The best place to find out how anything works on your course is to test it

on your course under your management and with your labor force.

Changing Bents

Q. We are interested in your article in July **GOLFDOM** concerning the change from one bent to another. We have our original Seaside in the first 9 built some 20 years ago, to which we have added about ten lbs. each year (after spiking the greens) of Seaside bent seed. The second nine also is seeded with Seaside.

I think that the bent has been satisfactory except that it seems very low in resistance to snowmold. When the bent goes out in the spring, poa annua comes into the spots. Some of our greens are getting to be almost solid poa annua. We are told that our feeding program is okay but we have this fight every spring to get the greens back into play.

Would you advise seeding into the greens some new type of bent, probably Penncross? Would this new seed eventually supersede the Seaside to an extent that Penncross would eventually take over? We have a very good spiker with 250 lb. weights, (pulled by our old three-gang power mower). We count on seeding the Penncross, then compost with the compost that you saw at Magna, Utah. This is three-quarters sheepmanure with one-quarter part very sharp sand. This compost has in the past acted as a very good seed bed when we put Seaside seed into the greens. We don't like to waste expensive seed, but would like to get the Penncross seeding program started.