

GRAU'S ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

Superintendent Recognized

The American Home magazine for April 1960, carried an article, "Want a Lawn Like a Putting Green?" by Theodore A. Weston, garden editor. The course described in it was Williams Country Club, Weirton, W. Va., where Charles (Chuck) Onoretta is the pro-supt. Excellent photographs, accompanying the well-written script, showed the relationship between golf courses and home lawns — their sim-

For the last month, Fred V. Grau has been in the National Orthopedic Hospital in Arlington, Va., where he underwent spinal surgery in mid-April. He expects to be released in time to return to the turf plots around June 1st.

ilarities and their differences. Clear cut explanations of fertilizing, watering and management systems gave readers an idea of a supt's skills and abilities. This well-deserved recognition of a supt. will be of great interest and value to the millions of lawn lovers who would like to have a lawn that looks like a golf course at its best.

Heavy Soil in Greens

Q. Under separate cover I am sending you soil cores from three greens. I would like to have your analysis of these samples. Our greens appear good but they have that rusty look when you look at them from the side. I thought it was thatch because we closed last Nov. 1st and then had a warm month and quite a lot of growth, with no mowing. This spring I have verticut once a week, hoping it would help. I'll appreciate any help you can give me to solve this problem. (Ohio)

A. Upon examination of the soil cores from the three greens, I find, first of all, that the soil is very heavy. It has far too much clay in it, thus holding an excessive amount of water. Apparently the roots are having great difficulty penetrating the soil. There is a considerable amount



If you have questions about turf care, please send them to Fred Grau (right) c/o Golfdom.

of thatch and mat on the surface. The No. 4 green had about an inch. This could cause you a great deal of trouble because fertilizer and water and air will have extreme difficulty in getting through this matted layer so that it can benefit the roots below. Right now there really aren't any roots below this matted layer.

You should keep on with light verticutting in order to continue to reduce thatch and mat. In addition, you're going to have to do considerable deep aerating and topdressing with sandy material so that as much as possible works down into the holes. It is going to be quite essential to get as much sand as possible worked into these greens for better aeration and drainage.

Recommends Nitrogen Feeding

In addition, I would suggest that you consider going on a good nitrogen feeding program. The time to make a good application is when the greens are open and at the time you are working sandy material down into the open holes. You will get the maximum material down below the matted layer to encourage deeper rooting.

The rusty look apparently comes from poor nutrition. It could be the beginning of a serious disease problem, a *Helminthosporium-Curvularia* complex. This is rather common when greens are poorly aerated, have heavy clay soil and tend to stay wet. By lengthening the periods between irrigations, you can let the surface of the greens get quite dry, meanwhile keeping good moisture in the sub-surface. This will encourage deeper rooting. There may be a few squawks from the standpoint of hard greens, but these shouldn't be too serious. The sandy material that you work into the aeration holes will help to hold a shot even when the surface is dry.

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Grau's Answers (Continued from page 60)

Fine-Texture Bermuda

Q. I am asking your opinion on the new fine-textured Bermuda, such as Tifton 328, Ugandagrass and any other that you would recommend in our vicinity. I am building a new 18-hole course and I am anxious to try one of the new Bermudas. I have pioneered with bent. I am sure that I can have good bent greens here but I would like to have one of the new fine-bladed Bermudas because I think there is a great future for these grasses. (Texas)

A. You will be able to grow perfectly satisfactory greens with the fine-bladed Bermudas such as 328 and Ugandagrass. The principal difficulty will be play during the winter. The Bermudas will go dormant and should not receive heavy traffic during the dormant period. This can be fatal where the traffic exceeds a certain maximum. If the course is closed during the winter, so much the better. There are excellent greens of Ugandagrass on a public course near Washington, D. C. that have been under heavy play for two seasons. The first season they were kept open for play and, in the spring, they were very slow in recovering. Some areas were killed. This winter the greens are closed and players are using temporaries.

The management of the fine-bladed Bermudas will not vary much from bents. They must be cut at 3/16 of an in. daily and will require high nitrogen fertilization. Excellent drainage is a "must." Phosphorus may be maintained at rather a low level, but potash feeding must be maintained at a level almost as high as nitrogen.

Problem of Wilt

Q. Our biggest problem here is wilt. We follow pretty well accepted practices of the better courses in watering, fertilizing, etc., but during the summer months it is one endless job of syringing the greens. Is there something wrong with our Washington bent for this locality, or is it in our root systems? Perhaps you can suggest some reasons for the severe wilt that we are bothered with. (Indiana)

A. It is difficult to attempt to analyze your problem of wilt without knowing a great deal more about the details of watering, fertilizing and other phases of your management program. It may be that the roots are badly restricted by a layer of some kind. Perhaps the soil under the turf is too heavy and cannot drain well. Perhaps drains are plugged up. Certainly there is nothing wrong with Washington bent. It is one of the better ones, particularly for the hot summer months and, with a well-drained soil and good fertilization program, there should be little or no wilt.

I recently talked to a man who has been through exactly the same kind of weather as everyone else, and he is very pleased with his trouble-free greens. He has good drainage, a good grass, and he fertilizes twice a year with a slow-release material. Nothing is added to the greens during the entire summer season from late spring until early fall.