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Grau's Answers to Turf Questions

Mowers — Sharp vs. Dull

Some people are perfect "nuts" about keeping their mowers sharp like razors. The turf shows it, too. Into this category fall all supts. Without sharp mowers, in perfect adjustment, our courses would be sorry affairs.

Most other folks are not aware of the difference sharp mowers can make and do not know how to sharpen or adjust a mower. Poorly adjusted, dull mowers chew, fray, shred, fracture, crush, bruise, macerate, mutilate, maul, pinch, bludgeon and chop grass. They do everything except cut. After these torture machines have passed over a poor, innocent lawn, the resulting appearance is grey, quickly turning to brown. The lovely green of growing grass is masked by the mangled, ugly, splintered, dying leaf tips. No matter how well-bred the grass, nor how well it is watered and fertilized, all these advantages are hidden by the overall cast of grey and brown.

Inexcusable on Plots

On experimental plots, less than perfect mower operation is inexcusable. When this happens how can the taxpayer feel confidence in results of experimental work? True it is that some grasses are tougher to cut than others. Perennial ryegrass is the universal No. 1 candidate to test the supposedly sharp mower. Another that repeatedly shows the effects of dullness or poor adjustment is tall fescue. Dying poa annua seedheads give "sharp" mowers a severe trial. Ripening Bermudagrass seedheads (especially when the grass is short of nitrogen) are very tough to cut. Zoysia can be stubborn, too. Even so, mowers are made so that they will cut any turfgrass when they are sharp and properly adjusted.

Supts. can do much to help the home caretaker who has not had much opportunity to learn how to sharpen and adjust

(Please turn to page 48)

For Grass-Turf . . . at its Very Best!



10 ft. Grass-Turf Special



Multi-Purpose

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SEEDERS**

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mowers. First and foremost, every person who works on a course should be taught the fundamentals. The next step could be a series of clinics for club members so that they can keep their lawns "looking like a golf course." Supts' associations, which sponsor Lawn Clinics for the public should include "Mower Care" among the subjects discussed and demonstrated. It is rather pointless to recommend the best of grasses and fertilizers unless the turf is to be trimmed properly.

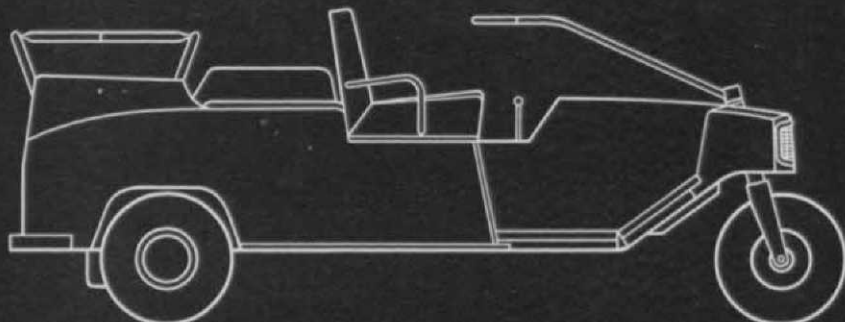
Impossible to Cut

Some homeowners have purposely destroyed fine turf after struggling to acquire it for the simple reason that it is "impossible to cut." With properly adjusted mowers this wouldn't happen at all. Timely articles in garden sections of newspapers can go far in helping to create an awareness of the problem and to give simple, usable instruction for the procedure. Mower manufacturers give a great deal of aid to the professional turfman but appear to leave the amateur strictly on his own. This is partly indicated by the amateur's oft-expressed desire for "a grass that will grow two inches and stop." There has been developed a resistance to the idea of fertilizing grass because, "It just makes it grow



Fred Grau, who has been confined to a hospital in Arlington, Va., for the past several months, shunned the clippers during his confinement and this is the result. If you didn't know him you might take him for Mark Twain or possibly Wild Bill Hickok. If you have turf problems which you would like to have Grau solve for you, send them to P. O. Box 8, College Park, Md.

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more so I have to mow more." If the amateur's mower were easily sharpened and adjusted on a do-it-yourself basis, most of the resistance to fertilizing and growing healthy grass would melt away. Nearly everyone enjoys operating a machine that works easily and does a perfect job. Trouble is most mowers don't!

There does not appear to be any simple, easy solution to this national problem. We certainly do not have the answer. Sure, our mowers get dull, too. Then we stop, sharpen and adjust. Combined efforts of manufacturers, experimental stations, extension services, and supts. seem to offer the most likely approach to continued education of the mower-pushing public.

Rye in Bermuda

Q.—My problem is the perennial ryegrass that comes up in the fall and stools out after the Bermuda goes dormant. With those bunches all over our greens it is impossible to putt on them unless we keep the rye mowed close to the ground. How can I get rid of the perennial rye without injuring the Bermuda? Could I use something after the Bermuda goes dormant? Could I use ammonium nitrate?

I understand that rye is toxic to Bermuda and my experience is that it holds it back late in the spring. How much more water would it take

for bentgrass than for Bermuda? What kind of bent would you recommend for this locality? Would Penncross creeping bent do all right here? Could bent and Bermuda be grown together? What kind of grass do you recommend for winter on Bermuda greens? (Arkansas)

A. As I analyze your problem without being able to see the greens and with the information you have given me, I suggest staying with the Bermuda greens and try to get rid of the ryegrass by close, frequent mowing and by even heavier fertilization than you have practiced. I would not use ammonium nitrate on dormant Bermuda. It would undoubtedly injure it severely. I would prefer to go to a Urea-form fertilizer which would be less toxic to dormant Bermuda.

For overseeding I suggest that you try Pennlawn creeping red fescue. This grass starts easily and quickly, can be mowed very closely — $\frac{1}{8}$ in. — and will not be nearly so competitive to the Bermuda as rye.

If you were to convert to bent, Penncross is what I recommend. However, it will take a great deal more water, management, fungicide treatments and many other things to grow bent.

Some clubs overseed Bermuda greens with bentgrass, but it has not been entirely successful. If you decide to use Pennlawn creeping red fescue, I would suggest that you sow it at the rate of 3 to 4 lbs. per 1,000 square feet. Mix it with approximately 10 lbs. of a non-burning, slow-release fertilizer which will help to distribute the seed more uniformly and will give the fescue encouragement during the winter.