

Grau's Answers to Turf Questions



Tidewater Breakthrough

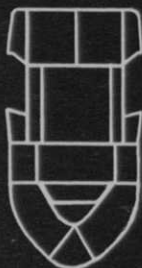
The "No-Man's Land" of turf, the Tidewater of Virginia, is in danger of losing its unique status. This surprising revelation came as a pleasant shock on May 17 following visits to the Virginia Poly cooperative turf plots at James River CC, Newport News, and to the James River course of the CC of Virginia in Richmond. Henceforth this area of difficult decisions will occupy a bright spot in turfgrass annals as a result of the brilliant work of a dedicated research man, Richard Schmidt of V.P.I., and of course supts., Hurley Savage and Harry McSloy.

Ever since anyone can recall, the time of "transition" from rye to Bermuda has caused strong men to shudder and golfers to flee far to the north (or south). Anyone who has experienced the sad condition of courses during the rye-to-Bermuda transition knows exactly what is meant. For some it meant an attempt to convert to bentgrass which brought new troubles of a different kind and no assurance of success.

The acceptance of improved Bermuda-grasses, (Tifgreen, Uganda) which break

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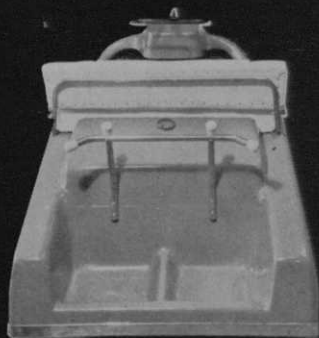
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dormancy early, have helped to ease the transition conditions. The real break has come with the use of Pennlawn creeping red fescue for winter turf on Bermuda greens. This is neither the time nor the place to cite rates and dates of overseeding. These details are the prerogative of Prof. Schmidt of V. P. I. who will have data that will be published.

Has to be Seen to be Appreciated

First publication to reach this department is a mimeograph report by R. E. Schmidt and R. E. Blaser of V. P. I. citing data prepared for the joint meeting of the Central and Tidewater Turfgrass assns. on Apr. 25, 1961, at the James River CC. It is an excellent report but it is significant that no printed report accurately can describe the quality that can be seen and felt by the golfer for whom the turf is designed. This dept. takes real pleasure in saying to everyone who appreciates quality, that the excellence of the Pennlawn fescue plots is positively thrilling. It appears that the transition will be so gradual that no one will be conscious of the change from fescue to Bermuda. It is significant that every blade of fescue stands stiffly upright and provides just the right speed and amount of resistance to give the ball a true course without "drift." Color is an attractive green and wear resistance appears to be excellent.

Where methods of seedbed preparation were studied, it becomes clearly evident that Pennlawn fescue provides the best results with the least preparation. Surface scarification (aero-thatching or verti-cutting) plus topdressing seem to be the best procedure.

At Farmville, Va., the 9-hole Longwood CC course (Ugandagrass greens) provided excellent winter greens with Pennlawn overseeded. T. K. Baldwin has expressed pleasure with the results.

Way Out in Front

A review of the total situation sharply focuses the fact that most of the problems of spring transition have been minimized with Pennlawn creeping red fescue. No one claims that Pennlawn is the best grass for winter putting greens on a Bermuda base but, at the present writing, it is way ahead of whatever is in second place.

Now the influence of various management practices must be sized up for their effect on the performance of the fescue. Whatever develops from the continuing study, it is a matter of record that the Tidewater of Virginia has been the scene

(Continued on page 90)



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Three Rivers, Michigan

Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 45)

of a significant revolution in over-seeding warm season grasses. We commend Dick Schmidt and R. E. Blaser, Hurley Savage, Harry McSloy and all others who have made contributions to this great advance.

Q: I am sending some samples of sandy loam, peat, and sand, that are available in this section for topdressing greens. Greens have not been topdressed in two years. We can not buy a coarser sand here. Is this sand too fine to use on greens? We sent plugs for soil test. Reports back were around Ph 6.4 and a sandy loam in upper 2 ins. Is this sand too fine and will it pack too much in a 1-1-1 mixture? (Ohio)

A: The sample of sand is so fine that you will be well advised to leave it strictly alone and look for a source of coarser sand. In a 1-1-1 mix you would develop a low-grade cement. The soil is a floury silt that is about the worst you could put in a topdressing mixture. The peat is of good quality but is not of much use by itself.

Rather than use a mixture that will give you future trouble, you will be better off to do no topdressing. You can do a great deal by cultivating the greens now while growth is active,

and by fertilizing generously with slow-acting, insoluble types of nitrogen. The aero-thatching process brings a great deal of soil to the surface where it is distributed by dragging and where it becomes your topdressing. The soil is in a pulverized condition so that the putting surface after the operation is as smooth as before.

Fertilizing immediately after the cultivating procedure is excellent practice. The maximum quantity of plant food enters the rootzone where it can be of the greatest benefit.

Some supts. who have not topdressed a green in 25 years tell me that they can't see any reason for it.

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