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Grau's Answers to Turf Questions



A Time to Rest

This dept. has been the recipient of almost every question that can be asked about turf and turf management. It gives great pleasure to be able to answer questions that are certain to help our correspondents to avoid unnecessary trouble. One such question is, "Should I aeration (or verti-cut) in hot weather?"

The answer is found in one of the Q & A's in this issue. The man is buying a new machine. Understandably, he wants that machine to work for him and to give him maximum benefit. The philosophy that we attempt to impart is that there is "A Time to Rest."

This man's greens are bentgrass. He has overseeded with Penncross. It is natural and normal for bents (and other cool-season grasses) to take a rest during summer's heat. Just as we are admonished to "let sleeping dogs lie," so should we do as little as possible to disturb the "rest" of the bents. The possibility of damaging the grass is very great. The chance of helping it in some way is small.

Time to Disturb Grass

The best time to disturb grass is during the period of active growth. With cool-

season grasses this is in the cool seasons of the year, spring and fall. One can do enough aero-thatching or aerifying or vertical mowing then to carry the grass over the hot weather rest period when the only activities should be mowing and watering. Feeding can be done in connection with cultivating.

Greens of bermudagrass (or zoysia) should be cultivated during hot weather because this is the season of most active growth. With these warm-season grasses, the rest period is during fall, winter and early spring dormancy.

There have been unfortunate developments on courses where spring cultivation has been delayed until the cool season normally had ended. Operations were carried out under ideal cool conditions. One week later the temperature shot up to 95 deg. The results were sad.

Use of the Aerifier

Q.: We are considering purchasing an aerifier or the new Aero-Thatch machine. If we buy the Aero-Thatch do we need an aerifier also? I understand the Aero-Thatch takes care of everything in one operation.

We sowed our greens over the sod with Penn-cross on first of April and would like to follow up on this care. Should we sow more Penn-cross in Sept.? Can you use the Aero-Thatch machine during the hot weather? We have been using a Verti-cut mower. I will appreciate your recommendation on these machines. (Indiana)

A.: Your purchase of the Aero-Thatch will make it unnecessary to have another aerating tool. The unique construction of this machine enables you to cultivate and aerate the soil, relieve compaction and remove unwanted thatch in a single pass.

It would be unwise to say now whether or not you should sow more Penn-cross seed this fall. Wait and see what kind of a catch you get. If you have your new machine by then it would be a fine thing to sow another half pound after aero-thatching. The grooves provide nearly ideal seedbeds for overseeding. This, also, is the ideal time to use insoluble nitrogen fertilizers.

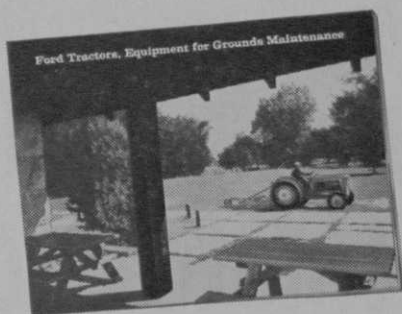
I would use a thatching machine or aerator only when grass is growing strongly. Hot weather is a good time to let the grass do some coasting. Vertical mowers are wonderful tools but hot weather is the time to rest these machines.

Recovery from Desiccation

Q.: I have several areas of winter desiccation on my greens this spring. What do you suggest to restore the turf? Some of it shows growth. Usually I apply a topdressing as early as possible with arsenate of lead added. Will this further aggravate the desiccated areas?

Can bentgrass seed be sown ahead of the topdressing and lead mixture? Will fertilizer

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Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 65)

applications be harmful to these areas? I made one application of 10-6-4 in Feb. I would like to make another application before going into a regular summer feeding of long-lasting organic nitrogen.

Our weather here is adverse this spring. For example, today it is snowing and the temperature is 28 degrees. It certainly is not the kind of weather we need for the recovery of desiccated areas. (Illinois)

A.: Desiccated areas on greens that show growth should be given every chance to recover with a minimum of disturbance. It would be inadvisable to apply topdressing with arsenate of lead added since this might retard the new, weak growth. Later, when recovery is complete, the leaded topdressing may be used.

If some of the areas appear very slow, or dead, you would do well to re-turf with sod from the nursery. This is one of the valid reasons for having a nursery.

Do not seed bent ahead of a lead-topdressing mixture. The lead will retard germination of the bent seed.

You do not state the rate of 10-6-4 that you applied. Assuming that you used it at a rate to supply ½ to 1 lb. of N, you may repeat the application now prior to your regular summer program of using slow-release N.

With temperatures below those needed for growth and recovery, re-sodding damaged areas should be of first consideration.

How About Top Dressing?

Q.: We have heard that topdressing greens is not as important as previously thought. Is this true? Is it a common trend to eliminate topdressing?

As to aerating or vertical mowing, could you tell us which is most necessary, or if both are required? How soon after new greens are planted should these machines be used? We have Pennecross greens which were planted in July, 1959. The soil mixture of our greens is one part black dirt, one part peat, and two parts sand. (Minnesota)

A.: There seems to be a slight shift toward topdressing but many clubs continue to maintain perfect greens with little or no topdressing. The time when this is done for the most part is immediately after thatch removal and soil cultiva-



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tion to help cover over the surface disturbance. If the topdressing material isn't sterilized, it may be best to learn to get along without it. There is no sense in reseeding greens to weeds every time you topdress.

In maintaining greens these considerations are important: (1) The soil must be loosened (aerated and cultivated) occasionally to get water, air, and nutrients to the rootzone; (2) thatch (accumulation of undecayed plant material) must be removed to such a degree that continuous firm healthy growth may result.

Machines that punch holes in the turf do limited cultivating and loosening but they aid in letting water, air and nutrients into the rootzone. The operation of vertical mowing equipment following aerating removes some of the thatch from the surface but cannot get at troublesome, deep-seated thatch.

None of these machines should be used on new Pennncross greens until you begin to experience difficulty in getting water into the soil. Allow at least a full year to elapse before starting soil treatments unless trouble shows up sooner.

A better mixture for topdressing may be four sand, two soil, one peat. Too much peat may cause serious difficulty by retaining too much water.

Eliminating Clover

Q: We have a problem of clover on our nine greens. It is coming in more and more each year but up to last summer there was not too

much. One green was just full of it.

A supply company salesman told me that some supts. are using 2,4,5-T to eliminate the clover condition on greens and said this would not harm the bent grass. Our grass is Seaside bent. (Illinois)

A. You may use 2,4,5-T on greens to control clover but use it at only about one-quarter recommended rate. Repeat as needed. Be sure to maintain a good feeding program. Clover can be reduced, and even eliminated, by a good nitrogen feeding program balanced with low P and medium K.

To Prevent Erosion

Q: On our course we have a very steep hill with a fairway at the bottom. The side of the hill is covered with rock to prevent erosion. We plan to cover it with dirt and plant over the rocks. Can you tell me what you recommend for this situation? (Wisconsin)

A: I suggest use of Penngift crownvetch. It will grow in unbelievably low fertility conditions and do a good job of preventing erosion while, at the same time, create a very attractive appearance. It needs no maintenance on a rocky hillside.

With crownvetch there is no need whatsoever to cover the rocks with dirt. If you use seed it lodges in the pockets and crannies and crags and will spread very nicely to cover the rocks.



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