



GRAU'S Answers to Turf Questions

BY FRED V. GRAU

How Can You Manage Turf If You Don't Play Golf?

Not long ago during lunch with Byron Nelson and John Henry at Brook Hollow CC in Dallas the subject of "golfing superintendents" was discussed. Without hesitation or qualification, Byron stated that every supt. should play golf for the simple reason that he will better know how to maintain the course for the golfers. Proof of this can be found at Brook Hollow where John Henry keeps an immaculate course with the turf groomed to please the players. It is no accident that John's score hangs around the low 70's and has been known to go even lower. Club members often ask supts. to play in their foursomes — a high compliment. Does anyone know a better way to learn player reactions to turf playing quality?

Encouraged to Play

There are many courses that are groomed to perfection by golfing supts., but there are not enough. We cite this one recent experience as an example. The situation has the complete approval of one of golf's greats. I had discussed this with Byron in Minneapolis during the Amateur Championship in 1952 and had actively promoted the idea during my term as director of the USGA green section. The GCSA and affiliated chapters

encourage supts. to play golf through regular meetings and tournaments.

Too Few Play

Still there are too few who play the game regularly and well. There has been a regrettable tendency to think (and say), "How can he do his work when he is out there playing golf?" Clubs should insist that one or two games a week with the pro, green chairman and a member is part of the job for which the supt. receives a salary. With a good foreman and a competent crew, work will be done while the supt. is playing golf.

The time may not be far off when a turf student, in order to graduate in turf-grass management, will be required to develop proficiency in golf just as he now must pass technical subjects. Truly, he can not qualify as a turf manager unless he knows the quality of turf desired by golfers. Grass can be grown without too much difficulty. Grooming grass into high-quality playing turf, pleasing to the players, is the highest art in the profession.

Testing Some Theories

We have experienced difficulties between golf and turf management that would have been ludicrous had they not been so tragic. One had to do with bent greens and Bermuda fairways. The complaint was that, in spite of heavy watering, greens would not hold a shot. The bent grass was suffering from too much water as a result. I was playing low-handicap golf then so, to test a theory,

Arsenic: Symbol As — It belongs to the "Nitrogen Family," along with phosphorus, antimony and bismuth. It is widely distributed as small percentages of sulfide ores of many metals. Most As in U. S. and Canada is a by-product of smelting ores of copper and lead. Highly-colored sulfides have been used as pigments since earliest times.

Lead alloyed with As makes harder, rounder shot. As and H can form arsine, a very poisonous gas with a garlic-like odor.

Arsenious oxide (arsenic trioxide) is the best known compound — often called white arsenic. It has a sweetish taste and, although extremely poisonous, people can acquire tolerance to it. Mountain climbers in Syria are "arsenic eaters." To gain endurance, they ingest enough arsenic in a day to kill an ordinary person.

As does not accumulate in the body. Skin troubles can result from using dry arsenic mixtures prepared for insecticides and herbicides (its greatest uses). Arsenic in poison baits long was the only way to control many insects. Minute traces of As can be detected in materials by Marsh's test.

It is useful for decolorizing glass. Many complex As compounds are used in medicine, one of which is salvarsan.

Arsenite of soda was used to kill chickweed at Merion Cricket Club as reported in July 1921.

Paris green was familiar to every farm boy who had to help fight potato bugs.

In 1926, Leach and Lipp, in New Jersey, reported arsenate of lead to be successfully controlling beetle grubs in soil. It is useful for reducing poa annua populations in putting greens.

High phosphorus levels in soils render arsenic relatively ineffective. One can substitute for the other in many chemical reactions.

I hit a number of balls to greens from 80 yards out. Sure enough, they wouldn't hold but the answer was in the fairway grass, not the greens.

The non-golfing superintendent, to keep the fairways "lookin' purty," kept the thick Bermuda cut at 1½ inches. The ball sat on top of a "mattress" so that no one could impart control to the ball with the club face. The "balloon ball" floated to the green and kept right on rolling off the back. By lowering the fairway mowers to ¾ inch, we gave controlled shots back to the golfers, the greens held better and were healthier with less water.

I used to walk and hit shots with Al Watrous and the late Horton Smith. One never forgets that their choice of a lie for a fairway shot was on a tight, close-cut piece of red fescue as next best to or on a par with close-cut, dense Bermuda. Most professional golfers agree that the

worst fairway lie is in lush watered bent that is cut too high. Ray Gerber of Glen Oak, near Chicago, and I checked that out years ago when we used to advocate high cutting to "save the bluegrass" in mixed stands. After 15 or 20 8-iron shots to the green the area looked as though the hogs had been rooting in it. Fairway mowers started cutting closer from that time on.

Exposed Thatch

Q. We have C-1 and C-19 bent greens that are about four years old. There is no subsurface drainage. Rather heavy thatch prevented good water penetration so we aerified, verti-cut, mowed and applied fertilizer and hydrated lime, followed at once with water. The weather turned hot (near 90 degrees) and a few greens turned brown. Some said it was fertilizer burn but I am sure that it was not. (Maryland)

A. Fortunately I was able to make a first-hand inspection. You may be assured that there

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Grau's Answers

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was no damage from lime or fertilizer. The brownness was simply exposed thatch after you took "Trouble From the Top." In removing surface thatch the green grass blades were removed. That left only brown stems. When I saw the affected greens a few days after the treatment the new fresh green growth was recovering 100 per cent. The greens have been greatly improved by the full treatment. The 90 degrees accentuated the "brown." Had the weather stayed cool the scalped thatch still would have been brown. You may expect your program to gradually reduce the thatch and promote improved water penetration. You need fear no reaction between the lime and the fertilizer.

Backyard Green

Q. I'm interested in building a small putting green in my back yard. Could you please send any information that you might have which would be helpful to me? Do you recommend planting seed or using sod? I want to get the green ready in a hurry. (Mass.)

A. There is no single piece of literature designed to answer the questions of the homeowner who wants a putting green in the backyard. To review the existing literature on the maintenance of greens would be a time-consuming task and one which we could not even attempt to con-

dense in these columns.

Building a green would be a simple matter. The maintenance of the putting green is something else. I would suggest that you consult with the nearest supt. and discuss the problem with him. He will be able to tell you the whys and the wherefores of the building and the maintenance. It is entirely possible that your backyard may be totally unsuited to a putting green. This could be determined only by an on-the-spot inspection by a qualified person.

To put a backyard green into play as quickly as possible, it would be best, after the bed is prepared, to lay putting green sod from a nursery. In this way you could be playing on the green in a week or two. If the green were to be seeded or stolonized, it would take 8 to 10 weeks before the green would be in play and then it would not be too satisfactory for another month or six weeks.

You must remember that a putting green on a golf course is mowed every day or two. They are watered frequently and treated with fungicides and insecticides whenever needed. Since it takes years to learn how to do this properly, maintenance should be put in the hands of a qualified supt. who can direct a workman to handle the necessary tasks.

It is a critical operation to keep a putting green mower in top operating condition. This, too, is not a task for an amateur.