



GRAU'S Answers to Turf Questions

By FRED V. GRAU

The "Year of the Goat," or the "Year of the Dragon" are familiar terms to Orientals. In the annals of American golf there have been no such designations—until now! The year 1967 enters history by becoming known as "The Year of the Superintendent."

Ever since golf began the public has heard and read of great golfers, mostly professionals. Names such as Ray, Vardon, Hagen, Sarazen, Hogan, Snead and many others parade across the sports pages. Golf architects names slip off the tongue — Donald Ross, MacKenzie, Crump, Jones.

The new star in the firmament of golf is a golf course superintendent—Joseph Valentine—who tended the turf at Merion Golf Club for more than 50 years and who groomed Merion for eleven USGA tournaments. Mr. Valentine achieved immortality and recognition for all superintendents in 1967 when the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania State University voted to name the world-famous turfgrass facility at Penn State "The Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center."

Thus has the "man behind the scenes," the superintendent, finally received the recognition he has so richly deserved. For too long he has groomed the championship courses only to have the winning contestants receive all the honor and glory.

The story of Joseph Valentine, with few exceptions, could be told of many superintendents who left their mother country and came to the United States. Joe was born in Italy and came to the U.S. in 1907. He was industrious and a good

worker. One lucky day, he joined the work force at Merion Golf Club. Before long, he was the head greenkeeper and, as times changed, he then became superintendent.

Like many of his fellow superintendents, he constantly searched his golf course for signs of success or improvement. Thus it was that one day in the early thirties he noticed a patch of "different-looking grass" on the 17th hole.

To condense a story that covers a quarter century, the grass that he observed entered research under the designation "B-27" and, finally, was released at Beltsville in 1950 under the name "Merion Kentucky bluegrass."

To attempt to assess the impact of Merion bluegrass on the turfgrass industry would, in a way, be anticlimactic. Suffice it to say that this grass, the first improved turfgrass from seed ever to be proved and released, revolutionized the struggling sod industry, and revitalized the seed industry.

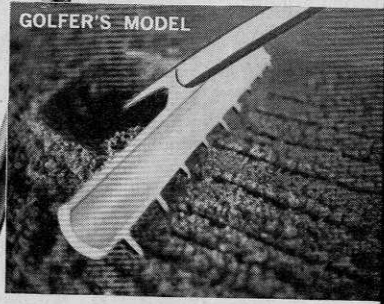
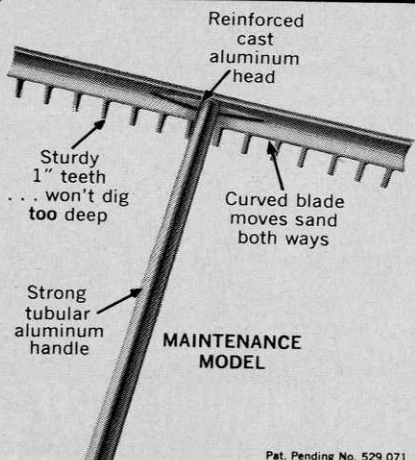
During the twenties, many superintendents (still known as "greenkeepers" then) were in trouble with insects that ate the grass, roots and all, and with diseases that ruined beautiful greens overnight. Joe Valentine at Merion was no exception to the rule.

One day in 1929, he and several other superintendents traveled to Penn State to ask for help on their problems from the professors. It is significant that the delegation went directly to President Hetzel. From this, there was developed, bit by bit, a turfgrass program.

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When it lagged in 1930 due to lack of funds, Mr. Valentine influenced Mr. Peters and Mr. Boyd, legislators, to introduce Bill No. 1297 into the Pennsylvania Legislature calling for \$10,000 to support turf research at Penn State. The bill was vetoed by the governor, but the point was made and Penn State's tax-supported turfgrass program was assured. This at a time when turf was considered a "rich man's plaything" and a product of horse racing and gambling.

To be effective, the professors needed to be kept continuously informed of conditions in the field. A Turf Advisory Committee was created with Joseph Valentine as chairman, a post that he held from 1930 until he retired in 1964.

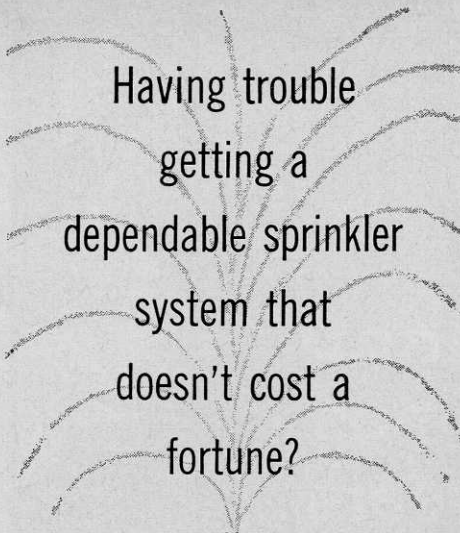
Had Joe Valentine been less in love with turf and his fellow man he could have become an outstanding, yes, famous, golf course architect. The layout, the curves, the bunkers and all features of the West Course at Merion bear eloquent testimony to his ability in this phase of golf.

The fame that has come to Joseph Valentine symbolizes the contributions that have been made by all superintendents everywhere. It is only fitting that the term "Better Turf" henceforth shall be irrevocably linked with the greenkeeping profession, associated with turfgrass research centers and their technical staffs.

The Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center will become a mecca for turfgrass enthusiasts. Here they will see, on a rugged stone, a simple bronze plaque proclaiming Joseph Valentine as "Dean of Golf Course Superintendents." A deep green turf of Merion Kentucky bluegrass will surround the stone.

Every superintendent, every golf club in the world, and every organization that subscribes to "Better Turf" may help to swell the fund that will build the living memorial and will provide money for research and educational purposes. The official address is: Joseph Valentine Memorial Fund, Box 324, State College, Penn-

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sylvania 16801, E. R. Steinger, Pine Valley Golf Club, Chairman.

Q.—At our club, we've decided ("if you can't lick 'em—jine 'em") to give up the fight against *Poa annua* on our fairways and do all we can to hold it year 'round. We know that we stand a chance of having it go out in a bad summer but, would you give us a summary of the things that will work in our favor? (Ohio)

A.—Good luck! Nothing will work 100 per cent, but these factors are considered important in keeping *Poa*: Maintain low N during spring seed set so that abundant seed is produced. High N can cause grasses to fail to set seed. Feed steadily at a low to medium level during the season. Organics favor *Poa* as compared with solubles which produce soft lush growth which falls prey to disease. Keep phosphorus and lime levels *high*. Avoid the use of arsenicals. Avoid moisture stress and wilt. Be ready to spray for disease when conditions favor disease outbreaks. Keep mowers very sharp to avoid bruising and tearing. *Poa* is very hard to cut when seed is being produced. Frankly, it is difficult to tell you how to *keep* *Poa* when my inner feelings want to tell you how to replace it with permanent grasses.

Q.—In the past you have written about using hydrated lime on greens during the summer. Would you let us have the formula once more?

(Nebraska)

A.—When temperature and humidity both are high and bentgrass seems to languish and melt in spite of your best efforts with fungicides, spray the greens in the evening after play has finished. Use enough water to carry the hydrated lime in suspension, very much as though you were spraying regularly. For 1,000 sq. ft., use 1/2 to one pound of hydrated lime. Rinse it in the *next* morning before mowing.

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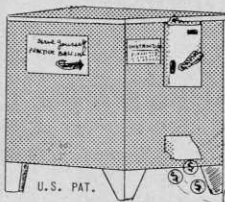
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grass a gentle "lift." DO NOT use any other form of N. (Soluble forms of N in contact with hydrated lime will release ammonia which will burn the grass.)

This is a supplement to your regular disease spray program—not a substitute. The rapid change in pH (up to 9.0 or 9.5) checks growth of harmful algae and other organisms.

Q.—I would like some information on Washington bent and, where I can send for it, as I've called turf maintenance and seed stores and no one seems to know about it. (New York)

A.—The ads have been checked in several magazines and here are the only two sources located: Hiram F. Godwin & Son, Inc., 55150 Ten Mile, South Lyon, Michigan 48178; and Warren's Turf Nursery, 8400 West 111th Street, Palos Park, Illinois. No nursery in Canada could be found that advertises Washington bent.



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Q.—We are out of the range of bermuda and zoysia. We've been cautioned on Merion bluegrass because of rust, striped smut and Fusarium. We've about decided on bent tees cut at $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. Now we don't know which way to turn. Penncross, it is said, gets fluffy, spongy and unmanageable. Seeded bents (colonial types) seem weak and unable to resist Poa invasion, requiring constant reseeding. What to do?

(New York)

A.—I would go with Penncross. It is economical to establish. Properly managed, it will be permanent. Fluffiness and sponginess are symptoms of overwatering, infrequent mowing, and over-stimulation with quick-acting nitrogen. Keep thatch under control by vertical mowing, frequent mowing, *minimum* water and use of slow-release nitrogen fertilizer. Top-dressing will help. Occasional water stress will not hurt Penncross but Poa will suffer severely. ●

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