

Tamers of the desert sand

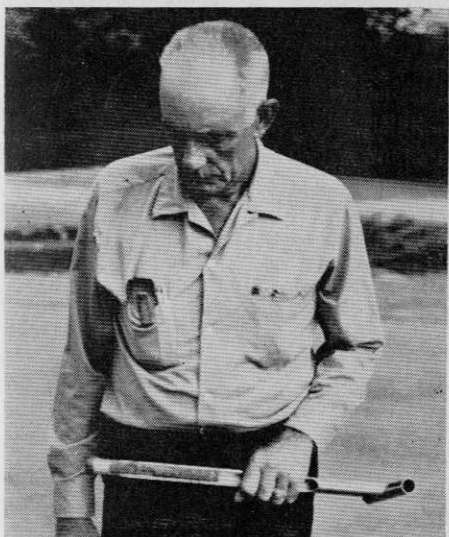
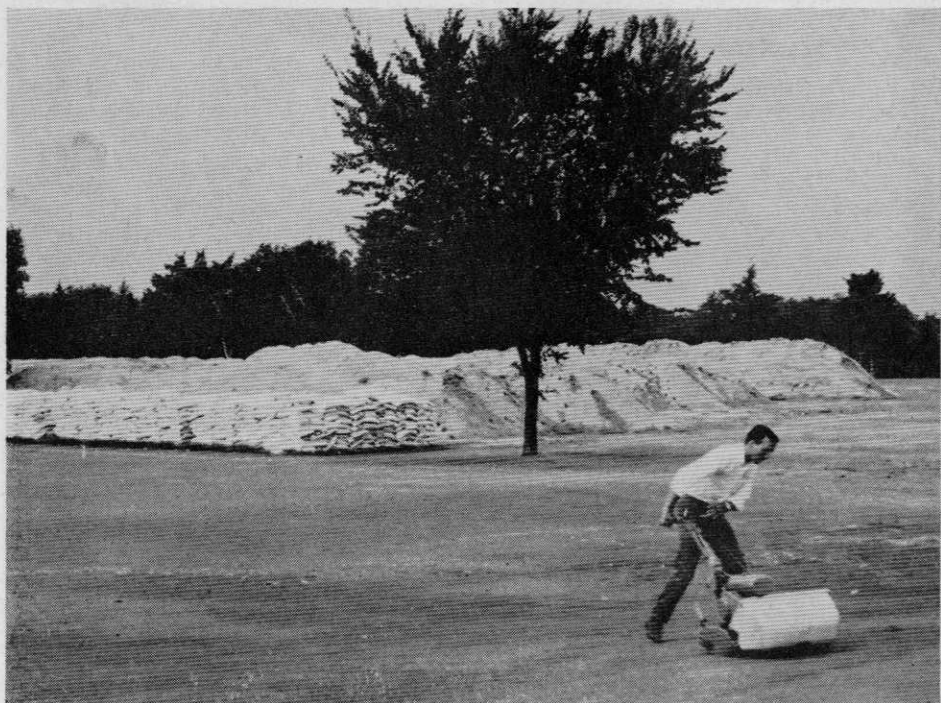
By VERNE FLOYD

Superintendents in the Southwest need all their skills—and a lot of water—to make grass prosper where once the Saguaro cactus ruled.



On recent visits to some of the fine courses of the Southwest it is interesting to see grasses thriving and providing excellent turf in an area completely dependent on irrigation. Golf superintendents in this arid region battle the intense summer heat maintaining their courses as meticulously as they do during optimum temperatures of winter.

The Dunes Hotel and Country Club, in Las Vegas, operates a golf course using only perennial ryegrass on the fairways year-round. Photo at left was taken from the roof of the hotel, 26 stories up, out over the swimming pool and parking lot to the golf clubhouse and course. A. B. Chadburn, superintendent, has so far, since 1959, been successful in keeping Bermuda from becoming established on the fairways. Fairways are cut at around one inch average height for the year. The Caliche soil, according to Chadburn, is more like concrete than soil and presents a difficult problem in planting grass, shrubs, or trees. Without frequent irrigation, growth would be impossible with the low yearly rainfall of less than four inches.



At Dallas Country Club, superintendent Otis Owen is now in the process of remodeling some of his greens. Among several improvements, he hopes to have greens of a texture that will properly take up the water and properly drain. In a large off-site mixing operation, shown above, Otis is preparing the following to make up the new soil: five parts sharp sand, three parts loam, one part calcined clay and one part peat. Greens at Dallas CC are watered once or twice during the day.

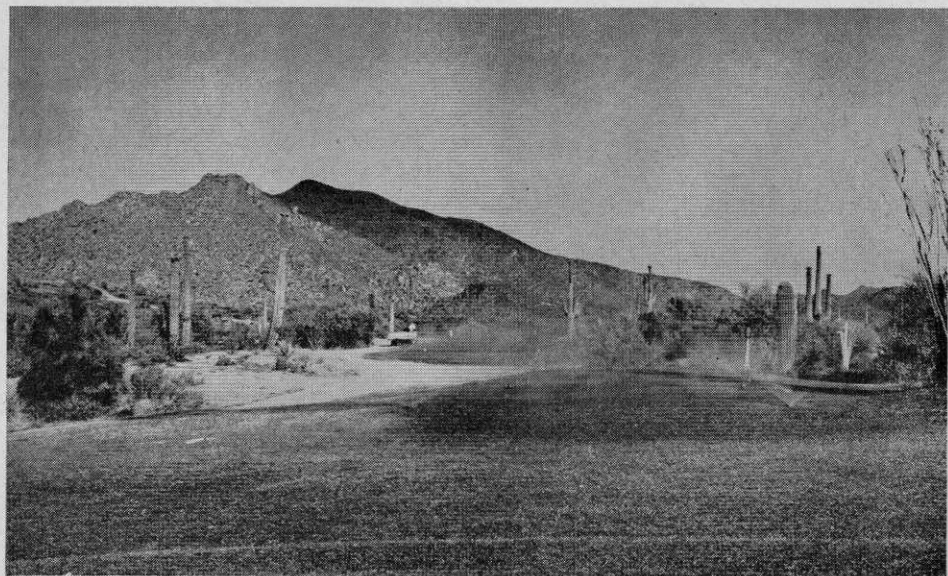
Otis Owen, left, shows how roots of newly seeded Pennncross bent have penetrated 10 inches of soil. Fairway watering is done on an average of one inch, once a week. Dallas has a normal annual rainfall of 34.55 inches.

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Desert Tamers

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In the rather hot Phoenix area, a very outstanding job has been done at the Desert Forest Golf Club, Carefree, Arizona. The design, construction and general maintenance has created in a cactus forest an oasis for golfers and wildlife. The variety and numbers of game species and other wildlife are much greater than anything we have seen on a golf course anywhere. Jay Woodward, former cowpuncher, and for several years a top-notch superintendent in the area, encourages the birds and mammals to live with the golfers. He himself is most active as a player. Normal rainfall of 7.20 inches, if not sufficient to support grasses, obviously has not hampered the growth of the Saguaro cacti, below, where tee watering is in progress. Jay Woodward is seen at right holding a burro that Jay promises to turn into a full time caddy. Taken from the wild near the course, the burro had different ideas during early training.



One of the courses open for summer play in the Palm Springs area, California, is Bermuda Dunes Country Club. With a June 22 temperature of 108 degrees in the "cool" under the trees, the Seaside bent greens, common Bermuda fairways, and flowers, below, appeared to be in perfect condition. Cleo Hardin, superintendent, like many others of the Southwest, waters fairways every other night one inch. Greens are watered once per day in the early morning hours before play starts.



During the latter part of June, a new course built on a bare hillside in Albuquerque offered a view of green from many miles around. Here, at an elevation of 5,500 feet, architect Robert Lawrence designed a beautiful layout for the University of New Mexico. (Pic at left shows view of 18th hole and clubhouse.) Vernon Ward of Phoenix constructed the course. With greens of Seaside bent averaging 11,000 square feet and fairways covered with cool weather grasses, superintendent Richard Dees has his irrigation job cut out for him. Fairways are given one inch of water every other night from heads located 75 feet apart in the 18-hole system. From an 1,100-foot well, Dees gets 1,500 gallons of water per minute to provide irrigation to an area with a rather low 8.13 inches of normal annual precipitation. ●