

# Answers to turf questions



by Fred V. Grau

## Does Turf need a Clearing House?

This question has recurred because of the many turfgrass conferences being held which can be attended by only a few. Surely there must be some good information at each event that deserves to be shared. When there is a published proceedings, only those in attendance, and a few others, will receive it to file for future reference. To everyone else the information will be of no avail unless scraps of talk "float over the fence."

Some twenty years ago at Beltsville there was a clearing house that seemed to serve a useful purpose in condensing all available information on specific subjects for wide distribution. Ferguson, Radko and Wilson will recall those days. The need for this kind of service would seem to be even greater now.

Several states have functioning turfgrass councils or foundations that embrace all types of turf, including Roadside turf. Most of these organizations are dedicated to providing periodic reports of progress in turfgrass management, which are distributed not only to members, but to everyone by channels of the extension service.

Summaries of conferences are helpful because the vital information is condensed for easier, quicker reading. Many full length papers that are published in proceedings really deserve to be condensed. Many superintendents simply cannot wade through the wordy scripts and extract the "kernel."

Perhaps the start of such a suggested "clearing house" will be the simple exchange of pertinent available information among councils and foundations. If this works on an informal basis we may have laid the groundwork for a national turfgrass council. Plans for just such an organization have rested in my files for many years. Activation and development of such a venture will require bold strong leadership. Is it time?

*Q.—Our new course is in the planning stage. There are divided opinions on selection of grass(es) for fairways. What, in your opinion, is the all-important quality of a grass that makes it suitable for fairway use.*

*(Kentucky)*

*A.—The first requirement of grasses suitable for fairways is: Ability to*

*tolerate close (1/2 to 3/4 inch) mowing. This just about narrows the choice down to a) bermudagrass, b) bentgrass, c) zoysia, d) bluegrass varieties that have been proved under close mowing; each grass in its region of adaptation. Within each species group, one must then select varieties which have the other desirable qualities such as disease resistance, drought tolerance and others.*

*Q.—We hear more and more about spraying fairways to control diseases and wilt. We are holding back because with our mixed bent-Poa population, it seems that we would be protecting our weakest grass (Poa), which is what we would like to eliminate. Would you discuss this viewpoint for our benefit?*

*(Illinois)*

*A.—Spraying fairways for disease control is OK if the population is mostly permanent grass and it is to be protected against diseases which will open the turf and let Poa invade. Some clubs that have a flexible budget may want to spray to keep Poa green and pleasing to the eye, but that is storing up trouble for the future. With dependable pre-emergence herbicides to control Poa, the best plan would seem to be to get rid of the Poa (drought, withhold water, chemical renovation), establish the desired permanent grass, then set up a program to keep the Poa out and protect the permanent turf.*

*Q.—Our fairways, mostly bent and Poa, are attacked once in a while by dollarspot. Should we spray or can we get relief some other way?*

*(Pennsylvania)*

*A.—The late Marshall Farnham used to take considerable pleasure in pointing out an attack of dollarspot on his fairways. "There," he would say, "is one of the best cures for thatch buildup." Furthermore he "sold" the idea to the members because "—it doesn't affect the play a bit."*

*We've learned that a light application of quickly available nitrogen can make dollarspot symptoms. Many times we have seen an application of finely-ground limestone do the same thing.*

*Fungicide sprays are sound procedures, but I suggest that you do not neglect the "basics." □*