



Answers to turf questions

by Fred V. Grau

Q's and A's

Q.—At our club we have had lousy luck with overseeding bents and bluegrasses. We can't always water when we need to in order to save the Poa annua so—we lose most of it. We've seriously considered overseeding with Kentucky 31 fescue for two or three years to see if we can produce better fairway turf that won't need so much babying. Your comments will be welcomed.

(Virginia)

A.—Before I encourage you to proceed with Ky 31 fescue on your fairways you should be fully aware of several conditions with which your Green Committee should be acquainted.

1. The seed must be planted in August and early September while the soil is warm. Tall fescue germinates and emerges poorly when nights get cool.
2. Rate of seeding must be heavier than with smaller-seeded grasses. A rate of 200 pounds

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- to the acre is not excessive.
3. "Punch planting," with the Gill seeder (or its equal) is recommended.
 4. Repeat the overseeding three years in succession to develop a high plant population that will produce the desired turf density.
 5. Warn the membership that the turf that will develop will not be as finely textured as bluegrass, but it will be very playable and will require less irrigation water and less weed control treatment.
 6. The turf will be greener more days of the year than any other grass now being used in fairways, especially during the heavy-play season.
 7. A slow-release fertilizer will promote steady growth without the "spurts" associated with soluble N which creates mowing problems. Five to six pounds of N per thousand for

the season is considered normal.

8. This is not a miracle grass or a wonder grass but a coarse hardworking turf-forming grass that is deep rooted and resistant to drought, insects, diseases, chemicals and wear-and-tear. It can't be cut as closely as bent (one inch is OK) but the blades are stiffer and hold the ball up well.

Q.—Our soil test reports just came back from the lab and everything is rated high to very high. Should we continue to use a complete fertilizer or can we safely use straight nitrogen for a season until we get another report?

(Maryland)

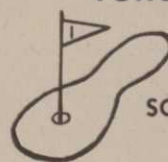
A.—My advice is to use nitrogen only until such time as test results begin to show the need for P and K. For effective Poa control you should work toward a low reading for P. Try to maintain a medium to high level of K for stiffness of leaf, disease resistance and winter hardness.

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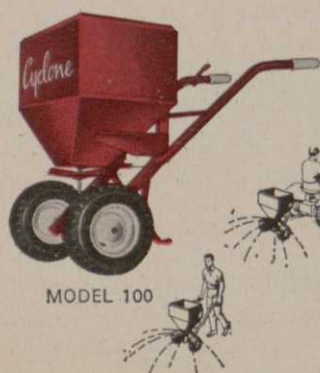
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Q.—Your opinion will be appreciated on this question. My greens (they are perfect) are fed with 12-6-6 (70 percent of N from ureaform), supplemented with powdered ureaform (38-0-0) and 0-0-50 sulfate of potash. My season average is about 9 pounds N and 5 pounds K. To date this year the greens have had 6.62 pounds N and 3.5 pounds K. Would you advise fertilizing again about November 1? I've heard many pros and cons about feeding after November 1.

(Indiana)

A.—With the carryover effect of the long-lasting slow-release materials, and the present excellent condition of your greens (after a rough summer), it would seem that no more N is needed this fall. I would recommend additional K from sulfate of potash to bring the season total to five pounds.

Most discussions about late fertilization center on quick-acting forms of N. With your program you could safely fertilize around November 1, but if the greens are perfect and growing well, why bother?

Q.—We are hearing a great deal about hydrated lime. Some report bad results with it in 1968; others swear by it as a great tool in hot weather. Can you help our thinking on this subject: (1) What is the chemical reaction between hydrated lime and chemical nitrogen fertilizer? And (2). Is it true that there is no reaction between hydrated lime and a solid ureaform nitrogen fertilizer?

(Maryland)

A.—The bad results appear to be associated with a) an overdose, b) using it too close to an application of soluble nitrogen fertilizer, c) applying it to grass that had been severely weakened by other agencies or causes. The good results were associated with light doses (1/2 pound to 1 pound to 1,000 square feet), most often used in association with 2 pounds to 1,000 pounds of a powdered ureaform nitrogen fertilizer.

Question one: Hydrated lime (Ca(OH)₂) is calcium hydroxide which combines chemically with soluble nitrogen materials to form ammonia gas (NH₃). This ammonia odor can be detected and a severe grass burn usually occurs.

Question two: Hydrated lime can be safely mixed with powdered ureaform in water. There is no chemical reaction because ureaform is chemically inert. Only soil microorganisms can release

N from ureaform.

Some superintendents report excellent results from dusting hydrated lime on dry grass. This is fine if there is no wind and if there is a good duster available. Spray applications of hydrated lime and UF should be made in the evening after players leave the course. The material should be left on overnight (no traffic) and rinsed in early in the morning before mowing the green.

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