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Answers to turf questions

by Fred V. Grau

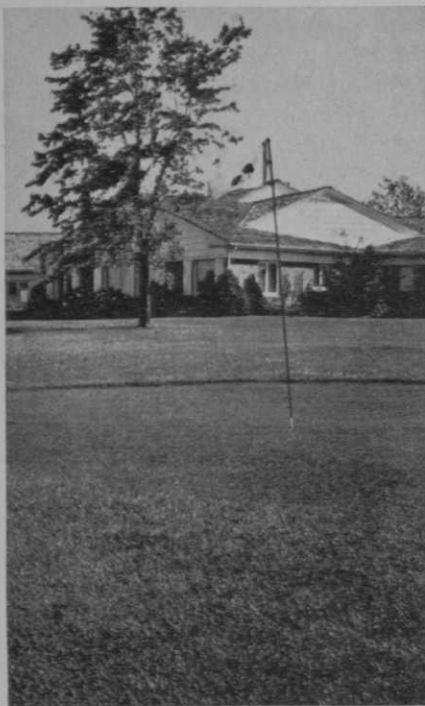
Leadership

Great credit is due the practical pioneers in greenkeeping who, by the "seat of their pants" established a sound basis for today's technological developments. They epitomized the idea of "leadership" not only for their fellow workers, but also for the scientists who learned from them.

Gradually the scientific instruments that were capable of measuring progress became available to the "turfgrass fraternity." Before these new tools could be used to advantage, there had to be men who were trained not only to use them, but to interpret the results. This came about slowly because funds to train the leaders in research were unavailable.

Recognition for turf study came in 1946 when the American Society of Agronomy, the most respected of all agronomic scientific societies, accepted this new phase of agriculture as an integral part of its concern. Soon there was upsurge of interest in the nation's universities where competent

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leaders must be trained.

From 1946 to 1953 funds were "scrounged" from one source or another, resulting in the training of several Ph.D.'s who have been the vanguard of leadership in the United States. For the last 10 years there has been a serious decline in efforts to supply and to train these leaders who are so essential to further progress.

Now, with the establishment of the H.B. Musser Turfgrass Fellowship, Inc., we hope new, vigorous leadership in the turfgrass industry will be developed. We hope that trained, qualified superintendents, who are desperately needed to manage the hundreds of new golf courses which are being built each year, will also be developed. More than anything else we must provide for capable management and supervision of the nation's golf courses and other turfgrass areas. For a man to take charge of critical recreational facilities he must be well grounded in a multi-disciplinary approach to the problems associated with maintaining suitable turf.

With an adequate resource pool of trained turfgrass scientists with Ph.D. degrees, we can count on accelerated progress in better turf; without them we can count on a future of mediocrity based on the feudal system of apprenticeships.

Q.—You have written favorably of tall fescue as a "turfgrass with a future." Do you believe that this coarse grass, which very few people like, does have a future and that it can be refined to become as acceptable as bluegrass, for example?

(Nebraska)

A.—As one of the early proponents of tall fescue and its virtues, while recognizing its faults, I am firmly convinced that this grass has tremendous potential as a grass for refined turfgrass areas. I have worked with it since 1936 when I introduced it into Pennsylvania. In 1945 I saw tall fescue in Oregon in all its glory. In 1947 I planted a 17-acre lawn at Alta at

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Beltsville, the first of its kind in the East. In 1950 Virginia planted the first tall fescue in plots near Fairfax on Route 50—it is still there.

In 1947 there was not enough Kentucky 31 fescue to plant the 17-acre lawn at Beltsville. A few years later there were 50 million pounds on the market. The mowed areas of highway roadsides would be in a sorry state today had it not been for tall fescue.

Several fine-bladed selections have been made. Frankly, the money and the interest have not been sufficient to move this grass into a place of national prominence. But the more I see of tall fescue (it was the greenest grass in Tokyo in January 1969), the more I am convinced that it has a great future. All it takes is 1) money, 2) dedicated plant breeders with a mission, and 3) time. I've seen it compete with crabgrass and *Poa annua*; it is green more days of the year than any other grass I've known; it can tolerate more chemicals and more salt than any other turfgrass; it has less disease than almost any other grass; it has a very wide geographical distribution; it has only moderate requirements for fertilizer and water.

Those who disagree are invited to air their voices in this column.

Q.—What is the background of the name Meyer for the popular lawn zoysia that also goes by the designation of Z-52?

(Maryland)

A.—The Z stands for zoysia. The 52 means that this selection was the 52nd in the series. When we were very sure that Z-52 zoysia was good enough to be released to the public, we gave it the name Meyer to honor the memory of Frank N. Meyer, a U.S. Department of Agriculture plant explorer. Frank Meyer had sent zoysia seeds (among other things) to the United States from China and Korea. One day long ago his body was found in a small boat drifting down the Yangtze River, apparently murdered.



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Our new booklet, "Golf Course Superintendent's Guide to the use of Royer Equipment" outlines these uses and several others. It also includes some tips on using the Royer Powerscreen. There's no obligation; a copy is yours for the asking.



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