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**Answers
 to turf
 questions**

by Fred V. Grau

Wear and tear on turf

To stem the rising tide of synthetic turf we must know much more about the wear-and-tear capabilities of a certain grass or of a mixture of grasses. We must know the contribution of the soil mixture (sandy-clayey-loamy), of the factor of the kind and the amount of fertilizer used, of the way the turf is watered and the way it is mowed and managed. We have at our command sophisticated machines, fertilizers, irrigation systems, but do we know how to use them in a coordinated program to give turf maximum wear-and-tear potential?

A limited amount of attention has been given to this phase of turfgrass management but critical research data seems to be lacking. Special "treading" machines have been developed and used to simulate foot traffic, but we contend that nothing takes the place of actual foot traffic to which turf is subjected in the popular tourist centers.

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Grau

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One such tourist center is Longwood Gardens located near Kennett Square, Pa., where visitors (no admission charge) are encouraged to walk on the turf while admiring many of the horticultural displays. (Visitors now number more than one million a year.) Recently director Siebert of Longwood met with representatives from The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council and The Pennsylvania State University (Dr. Joseph Duich, Dr. Herb Cole, H.O. Wilcox and Dr. Fred Grau) to explore the possibilities of solving some of the turf problems through a coordinated program of practical research. Out of the discussion there grew one very practical idea: Grow the finest sod of the best grasses in a no-traffic area, then lay the sods in the areas where traffic is heaviest. In this way the lawn-loving public would help to determine the development of the most wear-resistant turf in which they would participate for the *second* time when they choose the grass for their own wear-and-tear areas.

We did this in a limited way at Beltsville more than 20 years ago. The representative of a shoe manufacturer and I donned the company's shoes (spiked soles vs. corrugated rubber soles) and walked forth and back (one must go forth before he can come back) until there was very pronounced damage to the turf. At this point it is not pertinent as to which grass was sturdiest or whether the spikes or the rubber soles came out on top. The point is, the damage was inflicted by people walking, not by an inanimate machine.

We do not know how many "live" wear tests are active in the United States. We do not yet know if a "live" test will be operative at Longwood Gardens. But we have not seen a better potential "action laboratory" than the mowed turf adjacent to the vege-

table gardens. Information relative to such tests in progress in the United States shall be welcomed.

Q.—Recently we have seen an article referring to a popular ground-cover plant as "a complex vicious weed threat." Are not some of our best turfgrasses classed as "weeds" under some conditions? Are there other eco-

nomic plants that become "weeds"?

(Ohio)

A.—You have touched on a complex subject, which is capable of considerable interpretation. Bermudagrass, one of our best turfgrasses, always has been classed as a weed in corn and cotton fields. Maryland denotes bermudagrass as a noxious weed.

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SOW and STAND BACK!

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