



by Fred V. Grau

ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

People problems

This was the subject of my lecture on March 12th before the First International Panorama of Golf held at Palm Springs, Calif. This brief review is intended to cause each reader to think, "How many of my problems really are turf problems and how many of my problems are caused by people?"

A superintendent starts a calcium arsenate program to control *Poa annua*. The membership had not been warned as to the potential. Heat and humidity took the *Poa* out faster than anticipated. A crash program, with the assistance of a consultant, put the course in shape with the help of new grasses and a revised fertilizer program. Most of this situation had to do with people although it was called a turf problem. Essentially the problem was concerned with errors in judgment at several points.

Many recommendations for a fertilizer program have fallen on deaf ears because the material was considered as "too expensive." The real problem was failure to understand the principles of the product involved.

When a superintendent investigates prowlers at night on the course and is beaten to death with

golf clubs, we have a real problem and it isn't turf.

A new driver is mowing fairways and is tearing up the turf because a wheel came off. He didn't lose the wheel—he had it in the toolbox.

A chairman is tearing his hair because they can't control the "dollarspot." They had sod webworms. Was that a turf problem? Both can be controlled; identification comes first.

A borrowed farm sprayer had some Atrazine left in the tank. The greens that were sprayed out of this equipment were killed. A turf problem? No—a people problem, an error in judgment.

Uncertified "Penncross" bent was planted on new greens. It cost less than Certified. The turf was unsatisfactory. Penncross got a bad name. The trouble was that something other than Penncross was planted. This was not a turf problem.

A chairman decided to build the greens his way using layers of soil, cinders and horse manure. The bent roots penetrated less than one inch. In the nursery on unmodified native sandy loam soil the bent roots were 18 inches deep. Theirs was not a turf problem.

Everyone who has visited golf courses over a period of years could tell of many more such instances. Let's do some sorting out of causes and consequences. In many cases we will find that people are responsible for most of our so-called turf problems.

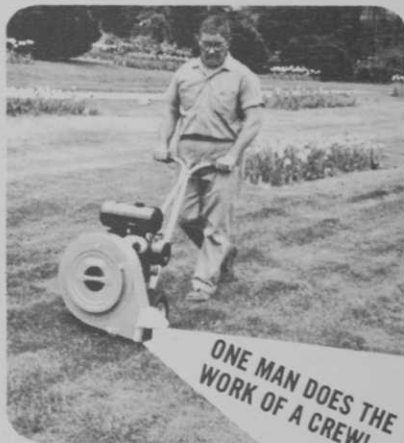
Q.—We are on a UF-potash program on our fairways (phosphorus is very high). Our complaint is that we don't get a "quick green" in the spring. What can you suggest?

(Maryland)

A.—First, you haven't been on the program long enough to achieve the desirable carryover which will give you the early greening you want. Second, I am not at all sure that this early green is what is best for the turf. Yes, you could apply

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GRAU

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soluble N to achieve early green, but then you may have much more grass than you want a little later. With a good bluegrass turf it is best to work along with nature and not force this "early green" at the expense of quality turf the rest of the season.

Q.—When you first came to California we showed you kikuyugrass and asked, "How can we get rid of this pest?" You asked a few questions about its ability to stand drought, its fertilizer and water requirements. Then you asked, "Why would you want to get rid of it?" Now, with good management, kikuyugrass is one of our best fairway turfs, needing no irri-

gation and no fertilization. My question is, "Do you still feel that we can live with this grass when it is managed?"
(California)

A.—Yes, especially now that we have heavy power equipment to keep the turf eminently playable. We do need to know how to control its spread into bunkers and greens.

Q.—We have been told that we are foolish to buy organic fertilizers (ureaform and natural organics) when the soluble nitrogen materials cost so much less per unit of plant food. We like the organics but we also are concerned with economics. Can you give us a guide?
(North Carolina)

A.—Inorganic (soluble) forms of nitrogen are more easily misused and, when improperly understood and applied, they are capable of causing considerable damage. I've seen so much evidence of ignorance concerning soluble forms of N that I've swung heavily toward the side of the safer fertilizers. A good UF, for example, can be misused rather badly and still will not markedly upset the equilibrium. True, the organics cost more per unit. The safety, the reduction in numbers of applications, the more uniform growth—all help to compensate for the differential. One bit of evidence of the value of the slow-release materials in spite of the cost is in the home-owner fertilizers. Nearly all of them now contain significant amounts of the safer materials that last longer.

Q.—I have been asked to use certain growth regulators along ditch banks and around trees on our golf course. Materials suggested are Maleic hydrazide, Gibberellic acid, Cycocel, B-Nine and Phosphon. Should these be applied in spring before growth is over 2 1/2 inches? Do you consider them economical?
(Canada)

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