



Juvenility: "Youthfulness or youthful manner of character" (Webster)

For the above word and what it implies particularly regarding turf, we are indebted to Mrs. Edmund B. Ault, who transmitted the word to me via her husband, the golf architect. Over lunch we discussed the meaning of the word.

The best and the most naturally disease-resistant turf is composed of young (juvenile) grass. There seems to be general agreement that severe turf troubles begin after about the second year. Merion bluegrass, for example, develops its weaknesses after three to four years, but retains its well-known resistance to leafspot.

Putting greens become increasingly susceptible to leaf disease as they age. New greens rarely have such difficulties.

If we agree on this premise, we can move to methods of developing and maintaining juvenility in our turfgrass areas. We lay no claim to knowing all the answers, but let's open the subject.

When a farmer's alfalfa or clover field "runs out" he plows and re-seeds. It isn't practical, however, to plow and reseed a fairway or an athletic field (but it has been done), so the superintendent must turn to a scarifier or vertical mower to remove thatch and old grass blades that are diseased and dead. Then he has recourse to lime (if needed) and fertilizer to stimulate new growth—new grass blades that are disease resistant.

Another logical approach to the concept of juvenility in turf is regular periodic reseeding. This method has been practical only in relation to the "scorched earth" policy until the advent of the scarifier-seeder, which permits the reseeding of turfgrass areas without disturbing play. Now the superintendent can actively promote

fresh young grass blades by growing new grass from new seed.

Tillering is a device of most grasses whereby new shoots are produced close to the old stem. The new tillers are fresh and essentially juvenile plants.

Rhizomes of certain grasses (Kentucky bluegrass, for example) continue to produce new fresh growth which is much more disease resistant than the old blades.

Stolons of other grasses (Penncross creeping bent is a good example) grow out from the parent plant, take root at the nodes and produce fresh shoots which are highly resistant to disease.

In summary, the turfgrass manager must do everything he can to keep his grass from growing old. Juvenility is encouraged by: 1) liming and fertilizing; 2) periodic reseeding; 3) stimulating rhizome and stolon growth by scarification and cultivation; 4) sensible irrigation, and 5) removing old diseased leaves.

Q—*We plan to use triplex greens mowers, but we are concerned about the compaction that may result. The manufacturer claims that compaction will be minimal. How do you view the situation?*

Similarly, we are concerned about compaction on our fairways even though the golf cars have over-size tires. (Pennsylvania)

A—Compaction from triplex greens mowers and from golf cars does not seem to be one of the major problems with these pieces of equipment. The heel print from a golfer's shoe will show more compaction than will tire tracks from mowers and golf cars. Modern aeration equipment is designed to correct compaction regardless of the cause. Good turf kept on the "dry side" resists compaction better than does overwatered turf. □

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