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by Fred V. Grau

ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

Turf in South Africa

Park turf and street turf in Johannesburg and Pretoria mainly is kikuyu-grass. It needs little attention aside from mowing and rarely is watered. Many new lawns are planted to kikuyu. It is vigorous, nearly pest free and weed free. On golf fairways it is excellent when managed, but it gets thick and fluffy when neglected or when cut too high.

Common bermudagrass—called "Kweek"—is widely used for fairway turf. During drought periods it remains green much longer than "improved" strains. Bradley, an improved type, shows nematode damage, except where generously fertilized and watered. Florida C. is a fine-bladed grass that is used on greens, tees and fairways. In the absence of a high maintenance program it falls a bit short. Skaaplaas Fine in my view is the outstanding specialty grass for greens, lawns and other close-cut turf. Another one high on my list is Frankwald Fine which is used on tennis courts.

It was interesting to observe the beginnings of Penncross bent in the Transvaal (elevation over 5,000 feet). First attempts suffered from an on-site mixing of gold-mine sand and sawdust. Mixing and composting of sawdust both were incomplete. Penncross bent will succeed, but all factors must be right, not the least of which is a superintendent who knows bent.

The new course being built by Gary Player and Sid Brews is designed for Penncross greens, and their basics are sound.

Bermuda greens are brown from May to October (winter) and are played on continuously. When bent greens become established, it would seem logical that there will be a general conversion. *Poa annua* is one of the dreaded pests in dormant bermudagrass. In Penncross it would be a minor inconvenience.

A common weed in turf is "young osgrass" or "young oxgrass," so named because it is so tough. It is *Eleusine indica*: goosegrass.

The Merion Kentucky bluegrass that I sent to South Africa 10 years ago is still thriving in partial shade of a plum tree in Johannesburg and also at the Frankwald Research Station. It would seem that cool-season grasses are deserving of further research.

A good rough grass on many courses is *Eragrostis curvula*, weeping lovegrass. It is a drought tolerant bunchgrass that can stand occasional close clipping. It is used widely in the United States on dry sandy sites from Maryland south.

At Reading CC on the No. 9 green a new type of bermudagrass has been observed growing in pure stands in patches several feet square. The grass is very fine without grain and has good color. Suggestions were made for spreading it.

It seems to be universal—operators on fairway mowers tend to travel too fast. The result is a ribbing which detracts from the general appearance.

One outfit near Carletonburg has started an irrigated grass and sod nursery. The principal grass so far is Skaaplaas Fine which is kept free of goosegrass by a crew of 140 native women.

In my view the most serious deterrent to progress in turfgrass research and education in South Africa is official apathy. There is a great need to train young men in technical and practical aspects of turfgrass management. A turfgrass survey would do much to put this phase of agriculture in proper perspective. Official recognition of turf by leading agricultural and horticultural bodies would help to lift it out of the doldrums.

Chemical substitutes: in time?

Q—The proposed restrictions on mercury, cadmium, arsenic and other long-time friends of good turf are
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causing considerable concern. Will we have acceptable substitutes for controlling weeds, diseases and insects? Will they be available in time to avoid wholesale destruction of turf? Where do we look for relief? (Illinois)

A—First, keep in close touch with your county agent and your turfgrass specialist from the state university. It is their business to keep in close touch with such developments as these. They may not know all the answers, but they know where to get them. I am confident that our chemical industries will find acceptable, efficient, bio-degradable materials that will not add to environmental pollution.

Q—We have Seaside greens and we are not completely happy with them. Can we reseed them with Certified Penncross and expect good results? (Arizona)

A—Yes, I've recommended this procedure many times and shall continue to do so. Be sure that the green is thatched and well spiked so that the seed comes in contact with the soil. One-half pound of seed per thousand usually is considered sufficient.

For farms, not golf courses

Q—An official at our club engaged a private independent soil testing laboratory to sample and test the soils on our new course. We are quite unfamiliar with their figures and their terminology. They reported the quantity of nitrogen in the soil and used that to calculate the N needed to establish the turf. We think that their recommendations are too low. We enclose a copy of the test results. May we have your comments? (Virginia)

A—Nor am I familiar with their method of reporting. It seems that they are farm-oriented because their explanations revolve around manure, legumes-plowed-down and crop residue. I must agree that the nitrogen recommendations for establishment are too low. Ureaform was recommended but the quantity was too small to be significant.

My suggestion is to contact your state extension turf specialist who can assist in management problems during maintenance. Close correlation between establishment and maintenance is basic to success.

Q—Some heated discussions arise around here concerning artificial turf. You have been in this turf business a