



A LITTLE WILDERNESS

When I visited the Princeton Turf Farms I also had the privilege of visiting the lovely country home of the Parker Shirlings. The scope of the rolling manicured lawn (Merion and Pennfine ryegrass) was impressive. But one feature captured both my fancy and imagination.

Near the entrance was a completely unmanicured area—a natural wilderness untouched by mower, sickle or shears. It wasn't large, but it stood out as a miniature masterpiece. I cannot name the various plants in this ecological paradise, but each plant in its season contributed to the over-all sense of beauty and naturalness. There were black-eyed susans, goldenrod, butterfly weed, bee balm, artichokes—you name it and probably it was there. Was this another of Parker's innovations? Not so. It was Ms. Shirling's love of wild things that prompted her to pre-empt this spot for her bit of wilderness. Parker just went along, and he loves it.

I am sure that nearly every golf course, cemetery or park has a quiet secluded corner that could be devoted to a miniature wilderness acre. It won't be Yosemite or a Grand Canyon or a Bryce Canyon, but it could be the source of inspiration for members and students who love nature. Let's not kill every weed in sight or mow every acre. Rather, let's give nature a chance to express herself. Let's go gather seeds from the wild flowers along the highway and scatter them in a wilderness acre. They will grow.

In this wilderness acre, we might expect to find nests of various kinds of birds; burrows of harmless friendly animals. On our farms near State College, Md., we allowed our

fence rows to develop much as do the hedge rows (doomed, I'm afraid) in England. The wealth of wildlife living in these undisturbed sanctuaries is remarkable. There is abundant plant life, too. In season there is pokeweed, dock, wild black raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, elderberries, wild cherries, sumac and others.

I've merely made an outline of an idea. Remember my suggestion (January issue, p. 17) on capitalizing on a perennial wet area by planting bog plants? There also are Xerophytes (plants that tolerate drought). And don't forget the wild grasses that used to clothe our prairies (bluestems, Indian grass and cordgrass).

This writer invites discussions and comments on this "wild" idea. Anybody with it?

Q—*Our golf course superintendent is considering an offer to become a country club manager. His training certainly qualifies him for that position, but we are reluctant to let him go because he has kept the course in such wonderful condition. We do not want to stand in his way, but is this the route to go?* (Vermont)

A—I think a move from golf course superintendent to country club manager is a definite plus for both professions. The manager position then will have someone who understands the golf course and how the club operates. The new superintendent can be sure of sympathetic understanding where the golf course is concerned. The superintendent's profession should be proud that "one of their boys" made it. The thinking used to be that the superintendent was in a dead end profession. Don't you be-

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lieve it. A superintendent occupying the country club manager's chair consolidates the two most important functions at the club. You had better let him go.

Q—This, the year of Agnes on the eastern seaboard, told us that there are a few things about tri-calcium arsenate that we did not know. Some superintendents lost all their Poa quickly when they wanted it to go out gradually. And some lost their jobs. All the explanations in the book did not help the superintendent, the green chairman or irate golfers. Have we gone too far too fast on these chemicals without a firm knowledge of how to stop an action with a reaction? We suffered, too. (Virginia)

A—I must confess to two things: 1) I helped start the arsenic parade in 1931 at Arlington Farms (anyone remember?), and 2) I do not have the full technical and chemical knowledge to interpret exactly what has happened. To spout jargon about P-levels, temperatures, moisture levels, soil texture, grass species, nitrogen levels and so forth would do little good. Obviously, we've gotten ahead of ourselves. Let's slow down on the chemicals. Study up on our lime and fertilizer and introduce grasses so sturdy that, by themselves, they can whip Poa. And, watch the water.

Q—At the Turfgrass Field Days at Penn State, we heard and saw evidence that the new elite perennial ryegrasses (Pennfine, Manhattan) represent one of the biggest breakthroughs in turfgrass breeding history. Oddly enough, the parents of most of these remarkable grasses came from golf course fairways, where they had survived in spite of everything. Some of the most knowledgeable superintendents thought that they were bluegrasses. Now comes the question. With this public build-up, we rushed to our favorite turf seed dealer only to learn that strikers and protesters on the West Coast had tied up trucking, and we couldn't get these grass seeds in time for our fall seeding programs. Is there a credibility gap somewhere? (New Jersey)

A—Obviously, I don't have a final or even a satisfactory answer to your question. From harvest through processing, testing, then shipping, there is not enough time to meet the demands of the central area or crabgrass belt. For over-seeding in the South, there is no real problem. When strikes and protesters intervene there is little we can do. The problem will be solved when there is enough carryover to meet the demands on the spot.

Q—At our Mid-Atlantic GCSA meeting recently, you said that Pennncross was superior in its adaptability because of its genetic variability. I have putting greens of C-1 and C-19 that are equal to my Pennncross, but do not credit C-1 and C-19 with the same quality? (Virginia)

A—Three vegetative parents, grown in alternative rows, are allowed to topcross freely; then the entire field is harvested to produce "Certified Blue Tag Pennncross." Then uncounted numbers of natural sexual crosses among the three different vegetative parents produces the genetic variability, which is a vital characteristic of Pennncross. When this seed is planted there is a great similarity among the seedlings, but there are differences also. The weaker types succumb to disease and competition; the stronger ones dominate. In Georgia it will be the heat- and disease-tolerant types that will develop into mature turf. In Wisconsin and Pennsylvania the cold, hardy types will survive.

C-1 (Arlington) and C-19 (Congressional) vegetative creeping bents are mono-cultures. They must be managed very carefully because they have no ability to adapt as Pennncross can. The reason that your C-1 and C-19 greens are as perfect as your Pennncross is because you are an excellent manager and you know how to treat bent greens to bring out the best qualities in any grass.

As in bluegrass blends, we are moving away from mono-cultures. Apomictic Merion bluegrass is a good example of a mono-culture that by itself is susceptible to stripe smut, rust and *Fusarium*; blended with Fylking and Pennstar, these weaknesses are masked. □