

The Wanderings of a Greenkeeper

By GEORGE ROBB
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JOHN MCNAMARA, of the Pittsburgh Field Club, struck a responsive note in his article in the February issue, in which he states that, had he his life to live over again, he would distribute his experience over a number of courses. I am firmly in accord with him, my viewpoint being borne out by my actual experience over a number of courses from the New England coast to the Middle West.

The Sandy Soil of Connecticut

In my first experience as greenkeeper at the Hartford Country Club, Connecticut, I had to do with a sandy loam soil, and plenty of it, with a good sub-soil which provided excellent drainage—a great advantage to any greenkeeper. We also had a good sand bank, which we used in the sand boxes, and adequate loam on the course with which to make our own compost.

Heavy Clay At Cincinnati

At the Cincinnati Country Club, Cincinnati, Ohio, I encountered a great difference in both climate and soil—in fact, conditions were just the reverse. The soil was a heavy clay, with not more than two inches of loam on the fairways—in some stretches, none at all. In July and August it became so dry that cracks formed in the ground large enough to admit one's hand to the wrist. In order to prevent a lot of balls from sinking that were never intended as putts, we had to fill up these miniature canyons with loam. Securing the latter was no easy task, and necessitated a country-wide search. The minimum price was four dollars a load.

Doubtless a great many greenkeepers, in reading this, will wonder at the amount of detail. This detail is included only to illustrate the great difference in the cost of maintaining different courses. The one that, like the

first, is fortunate in possessing so many natural advantages is bound to cost less to keep than the contrasting example which was so bare that everything had to be brought in.

Natural Springs in Westchester County

My next experience was at the Quaker Ridge Golf Club, Mamaroneck, Westchester County, New York, where I found a clay soil, but with more loam on the top than at the Cincinnati Country Club. The soil was very wet, with quite a number of natural springs. I put in over three thousand yards of drainage on this course. The greens were very poor and uneven. I procured one hundred and fifty tons of mushroom soil and rubbed it through a one-fourth inch screen. Once a week, all through the summer, I would put one-half a yard on each green, and by the month of August we had very nice smooth greens. Quaker Ridge, by the way, is the home of Johnny Farrell, one of our young champions.

Starting Bent Greens at Akron

From here I returned to Ohio—the Fairlawn Heights Club, at Akron, where the soil is a very heavy clay loam mixture, which I discovered to be a good grass grower if kept well manured. There were nine holes when I went there—of blue grass, red top and clover mixture. On

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George Robb



Front view of clubhouse at Hillcrest, Kansas City



Ninth green at Hillcrest with north end of clubhouse in background

than are required by the turf grasses, because of the stimulating effect of phosphoric acid on clover, particularly if the soil is not acid.

BASIC SLAG—This material is seldom used in this country but is a very common phosphate fertilizer in Europe. It is produced when phosphoric iron ores are used in the basic process of steel manufacture, an excess of lime is used to combine with the phosphoric acid and remove it in the slag.

Basic slag contains about 15 percent phosphoric acid and large amounts of lime. It is a slow acting material and makes the soil less acid due to the high lime content.

Potash Containing Fertilizer Materials

MURIATE OF POTASH—This is the most widely used potash containing fertilizer. It is mined in Germany and the newly acquired provinces of France. The principal grades imported into this country contain fifty percent potash.

Muriate of potash is completely soluble in water and hence may injure the turf if heavy applications are used. Although water soluble, potash is not lost from the soil by leaching because the potash is taken up and held by the clay particles of the soil in the same manner that ammonia is held. When the potash is taken up muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid) is released. Consequently muriate of potash tends to increase the soluble acidity in soils.

Clovers have a high potash requirement and are generally greatly stimulated by applications of potash fertilizers. If clover is not desired potash applications should not be made in amounts in excess of the requirements of the turf grasses.

Clubhouse Gardening

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"gardener" deferred the pruning till after the flowering period all might have been well. Forsythias in conjunction with many other shrubs, flower on wood of the previous year's growth. Thus to prune early in spring would be to remove most of the inflorescence.

Just to create a little diversion from the general theme and by request I hope to deal more fully with shrubs, perennials, etc., hoping that these subjects may be of interest to our readers.

Brother Members, Let's Hear from You

As we shall all too soon be looking forward to the long nights of winter ahead, and few can have the excuse of being busy, o'er fairway and hazard, may I make an appeal to a whole lot of brother greenkeepers, and remind them that whilst they are reading of others, the others are not hearing from them. Remember this, boys, you cannot begin any younger, so open up and do not hide your light under a bushel.

Say you saw the ad in The National Greenkeeper

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No. 5 green I put in creeping bent stolons—and then built nine holes more. The soil on the new nine was very poor, so in the fall I ploughed it all up and sowed it in winter rye. In the spring I ploughed this under, and drilled in soy beans, which in turn were ploughed under the first of September. I then put on three tons of crushed limestone to the acre, with a ton and a half of bonemeal, and seeded it down. In a year I had a splendid stand of grass. All the new nines are bent stolons.

Last year I built nine holes for the Brookside Country Club, Barberton, Ohio.

Clay Gumbo and Silt Need Constant Watering

The first of March of this year found me at the Hillcrest Country Club. The soil here is a heavy clay gumbo and silt. It requires constant wetting. It does not matter how wet the sub-soil is—a few hours of sunshine, and the top is as hard as concrete. For example, this summer we had three successive days of rain—then the sun shone for one day—and lo, we had to water again.

So I quite agree with Mr. McNamara that it pays to move around to different courses, profiting by the knowledge gained in contending with the diversifications of climates and soils. Truly, the old adage, "A rolling stone gathers no moss" certainly was not intended for a greenkeeper.