

Spring Rolling—When and How

A composite opinion by well-known greenkeepers

Editors' Note: In response to a questionnaire on Spring rolling of fairways we print herewith four replies from widely separated districts, viz., New York, Columbus, O., Chicago and Toronto. Several others were received but limitation of space precludes their publication.

By ROBERT J. HAYES, Greenkeeper Pelham Country Club, Pelham Manor, N. Y.

ABOUT Spring rolling, I would say that there cannot possibly be any definite date given for first rolling, but of course it certainly ought to be done just as soon as ever suitable weather and turf conditions arrive.

The correct time is after the frost has left the ground, and the ground has begun to dry. As a fairly good way to test the ground for rolling, I recommend pressing the turf heavily with the foot, and if real wetness shows around

the shoe, conditions are not yet dry enough for rolling. The ground is ready for rolling when only moisture, not wetness, shows on the shoe.

For the first rolling, a straight roller should be used, to level places raised by the frost, and such spots as may have been inadequately graded. (The springy condition of the turf that prevails, you know, at the opening of Spring, makes it really possible to do this). The weight of this first roller ought to be from 2000 lbs. to 3000 lbs., depending on its length—that is, on whether it is 5 or 6 sections.

A second rolling is desirable, this time with a flexible gang roller, which more readily than the type of roller used in the first rolling, fits into the contour of the ground and ensures every spot, low and high, being rolled. Each unit in this gang roller should weigh about 500 lbs.

By JOHN MACGREGOR, Greenkeeper Chicago Golf Club, Wheaton, Ill.

WHEN to roll is really up to the greenkeeper. There is no set time. In some localities it is done sooner than in others.

I have found the best time to roll is immediately after the frost is out of the ground because then the ground dries very rapidly. By walking over the turf one can readily tell if it is right for rolling, that is, when there is no water seeping around the shoes when one walks. It will be found the time allotted is about eight days; after that time the soil has become dry, then the roller does no good.

Rolling when too wet bakes or seals the surface of the soil and excludes the air which is absolutely necessary to plant growth. Rolling when too dry does no good at all as the roller does not leave an impression. When this happens rolling may as well be discontinued.

I think every one knows why rolling is done, but perhaps I had better state why—it is to press the roots of the grass back into the soil from where the frost has pushed it, not to iron out bumps and high spots.

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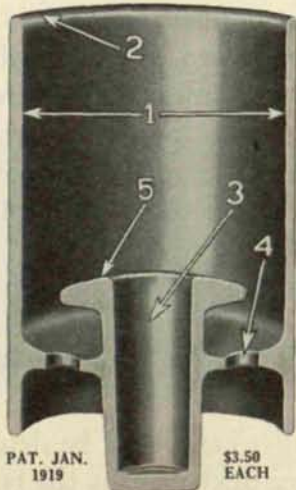
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As to weight of rollers, a gang of three rollers weighing about 600 lbs. each is sufficiently heavy.

Greens and tees can usually be rolled sooner than fairways. A roller weighing from 250 lbs. to 300 lbs. is heavy enough for this purpose. Greens and tees I roll both ways; the reason for this is a green roller is in two sections and when rolling it will be found that small strips have been left owing to the opening between sections.

The same judgment should be used as to the proper time to roll as on the fairways.

By GEORGE SARGENT, *Pro-greenkeeper Scioto Country Club, Columbus, Ohio*

PRIMARILY, rolling grass in the spring-time is done to press into the soil the roots of the grass which have been partly raised out of the ground by heaving and thawing during the late winter.

Secondly, it serves to smooth out the inequalities of the surface of the fairways and so gives the player a much better chance to get a good lie than he would have if the fairways were cuppy.

A great deal of care must be exercised on the time to roll the fairways. If the soil should be rolled whilst too wet, a packed soil would be the result; this would prove disastrous to the grass during hot weather, as air cannot penetrate to the roots of the grass should the soil become packed. To get the best results, rolling should be done when the soil is reasonably soft; so that the roots of the grass can be pressed into the ground, and not crushed onto a hard surface such as would be the case if the soil were dry and hard.

The best time to roll is immediately after the wet, soggy condition has passed, and the soil is in what might be termed a mealy condition; that is, soft, but not wet. Ordinarily this condition does not last more than a few days and the greenkeeper should be on the lookout for it, and seize the opportunity with both feet. If at all possible it is advisable to have two rolling outfits ready so that an eighteen-hole course for instance could be gone over in three or four days.

The weight of the roller can better be determined by the greenkeeper in charge, as the tex-

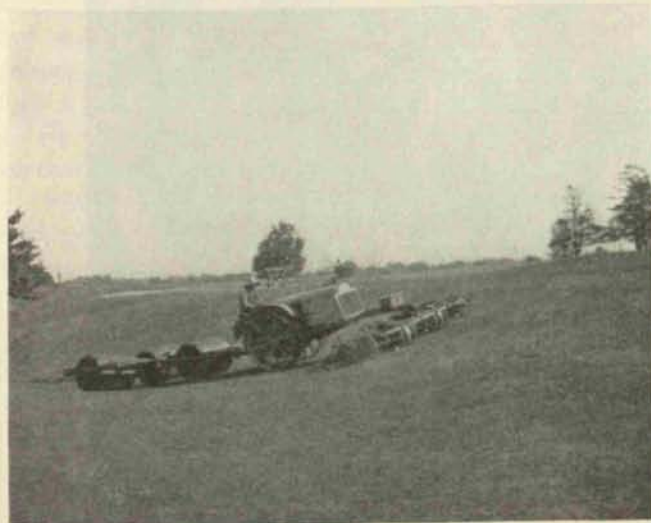
ture of the soil varies so much; generally speaking, a sandy soil will stand much heavier rolling than a clay soil. On a clay soil such as most of our golf courses are composed, a roller weighing from 1500 to 2000 lbs. and eight feet wide is ample weight for the job. I would not recommend anything heavier than those weights, it being much better to use too light a roller than one too heavy.

The number of times the fairways should be rolled can best be governed by conditions. If the greenkeeper feels that he has a satisfactory condition with one rolling, he will be well advised to let well enough alone; if he considers the grass is not sufficiently pressed into the soil, or that the surface of the fairway is still too uneven, he must watch for a second opportunity and perhaps a third; but by all means give them one thoroughly good rolling.

By W. J. SANSOM, Greenkeeper
Toronto Golf Club, Long Branch, Ontario

IN REGARD to rolling of fairways in the spring, I consider that judicious use of the roller is a matter that calls for the exercise of considered judgment. For whilst it is highly essential that fairways should be rolled as much as necessary to maintain a firm root run for the grass and a smooth even surface for play, it is a grave error to overdo it.

A great deal of harm may be done and often is done by using too heavy a roller, especially where the soil is of heavy clay. Rolling when the turf is saturated with moisture will do more harm than good. It is well to bear in mind that a healthy growth and



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proper functioning of roots is impossible when air is excluded from the soil.

Sandy or stony soil may be rolled a great deal and still allow access of air simply because stones and gritty particles of sand cannot be bound tightly together, but will maintain a fair degree of openness or porosity in the soil. Where the soil is heavy and retentive of moisture, rolling should be done when the ground is dry and never immediately after heavy rains.

Spring rolling of fairways should be done as early as possible after the frost is out of the ground and the surface water has drained away. A strict watch must be kept upon the conditions of the soil and the advantage taken of every opportunity. The time to roll in the spring depends on the locality, texture of the soil and rainfall. Light sandy soil or loam can be rolled much earlier than a heavy loam or clay.

The rollers I use were made in Toronto and consist of three-sections, each section being four feet in width and weighing one thousand pounds—that is three thousand pounds spread over a width of twelve feet. I have been using these rollers for the past eight years with good results. In having a set for each of my Toro tractors I am able to get my rolling done just as soon as conditions are favorable in the spring.