

Common Sense Greenkeeping

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BEFORE entering on the subject of Bermuda and its green and fairway uses for Southern courses; I want to have a few words on still another subject that seems to be growing ever stronger as time goes on; one might call it, "The Growth of Secretism and Mysticism in Greenkeeping."

I am not at all sure this growth is not fostered and aided by manufacturers of patent fertilizers, and such-like experts in the chemical world who cannot talk in everyday language but must inject as much Latin formulae as possible to make their products impressive. They are not entirely alone. I have heard greenkeepers are arguing about the characteristics of *Agrostis Stoloniferus* when they might just as well say creeping bent anyway.

Why all this secretism? It doesn't make grass grow any better. In fact the more theory the less common sense seems to be employed and in proof of that I have in my mind's view a certain course in

this district, outstanding as to its wonderful condition and the sole claim for the responsible individual is that up to a year or two ago he was a farmer. In comparison with this course how many do we know that, in spite of thousands of dollars expenditure every year on every new fangled so-called assistance, suffer a constant succession of minor ailments and for no other reason than if one constantly coddled a child and gave it every new patent medicine that came out you know what sort of youngster would result.

Because Bill Jones got fine results with such and such at so and so club is no certainty you will with entirely different conditions. The old maxim, "One man's meat is another man's poison," applies to golf courses as well as individuals. Experiment with all the aids you want, but use them with the help of common sense as well.

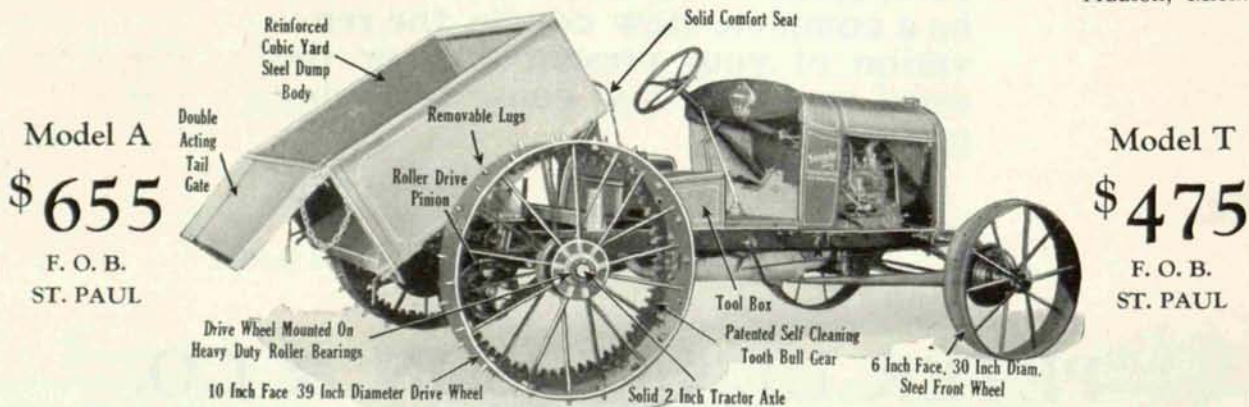
The above remarks are particularly applicable to Bermuda, that one and only standby of the South.

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After over a decade of experience in handling this grass, I am more than ever convinced we do more harm than good by trying to make it different to its natural self. Oftentimes this comes about by unnatural feeding and very commonly by trying to get results from an entirely different rootbed to the one nature always grows it in. How many times have I been called to look at Florida greens covered sometimes with a small shiny cloverlike growth and when I ask the question, "what top dressing?" always the same answer—rich black loam from hammock nearby where Bermude never grew and never will. Be fine for carpet certainly, not Bermuda.

Where do you see the finest Bermuda growing? By the roadsides and in the orange groves. Does it get any black loam or fertilizer in such places? Of course it doesn't. All it gets is heck from wheels on the roadside and a constant discing in the groves in a vain attempt to get rid of it.

RYE GRASS KILLS BERMUDA

IT IS surprising how few people handling golf courses in the South realize that year after year they continue to do one thing and so far as the writer knows the only thing that will kill out Bermuda in a very short time and that is the annual sowing of Rye grass. I am aware this is a pretty strong statement, but I want my Southern readers to look back and remember that every spring, lawns particularly that have been sown down in rye grass die out and the rye positively kills everything with it when it dies. This seems to be a feature of rye and curiously is not nearly so marked in the case of redtop. I believe the answer to this is that the Rye roots so much quicker and possibly deeper than the red top; anyway I never lost half as much Bermuda in the spring when seeded with the latter.

Now the question of seeding comes up. If you have a decent stand of Bermuda, I unhesitatingly urge that, instead of the usual method of one heavy topdressing of rich soil and one accompanying heavy seeding, you loosen your Bermuda with a good raking, then take your usual amount of topdressing such as you would apply to keep the green in play. Mix just one-fifth of the usual quota of winter seed and proceed to topdress in the ordinary way. In ten days do it all over again and so forth. This method has several advantages, first, the greens are not out of play; second, you can see from each successive seeding where extra seed is required.



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Needless to say care must be taken in watering not to wash the combined seed and dressing.

Bermuda thrives only on sand for any length of time. Of course, you can get a wonderful first and second year growth on rich soil but it will not last without copious dressings of sand. Again use common sense and remember where it grows best naturally. Last year on arrival at my winter position I found that the greens had had an extremely heavy black muck dressing. I immediately countered this with nearly an inch of plain white sand to the horror of everyone, yet last year's greens were the best we had for some seasons and what is better I am having glowing reports that there never was as much Bermuda in them as now. The sand did it.

As a last idea eliminate heavy dressings and you stop that usual trouble of a high ball cutting a piece out every time one drops on the green.

I cannot close without expressing my thanks for one whole week practically given me by that authority on Bermuda, Dr. Hinman, Chairman, Green Committee, Druid Hills, Atlanta, and member of the Green Section of the U. S. G. A. The visit years ago he gave me in Florida taught and encouraged me more than anything.