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About Bermuda Greens

How to make them and keep them up

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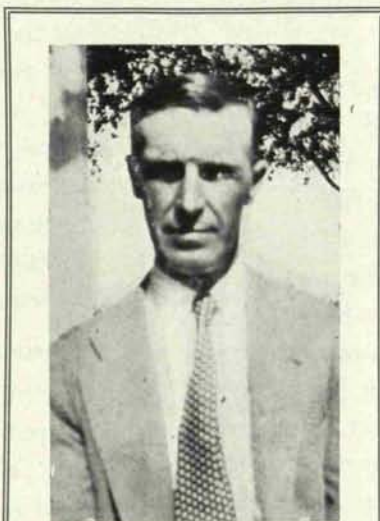
I NOTICED some time ago in your magazine you had inquiries from greenkeepers for articles of making and upkeep of Bermuda greens, and I am now trying to meet your request by giving you a little of my experience here in Temple, Texas, where I have nine greens and 18-hole putting course. All my greens are approximately between four and five thousand square feet in size.

I am going to make my article consist of four points, namely: Building a green and caring for it until ready to play, care of greens during the Spring and Summer, treatment of greens in early Fall, and care of greens during Winter when the weather permits.

My club being a small one, we have not any too much money to go in for extensive alterations. But my club gives me a free hand to make any alterations I care to that will improve the course and not cost any extra expense. The outcome is that I have built five new greens—made extensive alterations to two, and have built a new 18-hole putting course in front of the club house. I may mention all the land here is black land.

HOW TO BUILD A NEW GREEN

IN BUILDING a new green I usually plan on paper the size and shape, then go to the location and drive stakes in the 4 corners approximately to the height the green is to be at each stake. Then I drive three lines of stakes to approximate heights inside the cor-



We know of no man who is better qualified to write on the subject of Bermuda greens than is the author of this story. He has been very successful through sheer energy and originality.

ner ones, dividing the green as it were into four strips—filling in same with soil until the top of the stakes are covered.

I then start and put top of green as it will look when finished; after which I start and haul loads of sod ploughed from around the edge of the lake which our nine holes are around placing all the clods by hand until the green is sodded. Then I get a few loads of stock-pen fertilizer and cover the surface of the green three or four inches thick. All holes and crevices between the clods of Bermuda root are filled up. I then take a heavy mule roller and roll the green well—then water it well and re-roll. Then finally I get

some good light soil mixed with good sharp sand and put about an inch coating over the green and roll well with a 500-lb. hand roller. All this work is started in the Fall and continued to December, as the Bermuda is usually alive until December.

When the green starts to grow in the Spring I keep it well watered and rolled. The idea of watering is to cause a heat on the thick layer of fertilizer and make the Bermuda grow much quicker. After that I top dress it with sand soil and stock-pen fertilizer, which is well rotted and keep cutting until the green is entirely covered, at which time I give it another light top dressing and then put it in play.

BERMUDA GREENS SHOULD BE TOPDRESSED

DURING playing season Bermuda greens should be topdressed every four or five weeks, so as to

keep the runners covered and not let the texture of the grass grow rank and have a very hard stubble after being cut, which makes putting very uncertain.

I dress my greens all the time with stock-pen fertilizer, soil, and sand, and I have never used any chemicals since I began looking after Bermuda greens. Of course, some may say I am too old-fashioned in my ideas, but I have always had the very best results. My members are satisfied and hundreds of visitors who come and play from large clubs all over the 48 states congratulate me on the condition of my greens. I have had many calls for my advice from them as to how I get my results, and there is no use of spending money buying chemicals when I can get fertilizer for nothing.

Dressing greens in early Spring I put a heavy coat on, more fertilizer than soil and sand, and as the warmer weather comes I dress with very little fertilizer and mostly soil and sand. In the Fall, August and September, when the greens show signs of the hard play on them, I use a dressing the same as in early Spring, mixed with flue-soot. This I find helps to kill out brown patch fungus, and if I find large patches of brown patch fungus showing, I usually cut and replace with new turf. Another thing I notice helps check brown patch is in the early morning to wash the affected parts well before the sun gets on it and dress with a little compost from a pile kept handy to the green.

WATER GREENS DAY AND NIGHT

WATERING my greens, I don't water every day; usually two or three times a week, as I see they need it, and I water both at night and early morning and during the day I have to do some watering too, as our means can't afford a man all night. But during watering I keep the sprinkler going all day, so as the sun won't scald the green.

After the first frosts have killed the grass, I usually put on a heavy top dressing and cover all the dead grass, which in time rots and becomes food in itself for the green. The heavy topdressing gives me a better chance to keep winter weeds off the green, as you can drag the greens with a mat or use wooden spreaders which usually kills the weeds and at the same time gives a reasonable surface for winter golf and at the same time a protection to the roots from heavy freezes.

ROLLING GREENS IN WINTER

I ALSO do quite a little rolling of greens in Winter, as the black soil puffs up with rain and frost and the rolling keeps it much firmer. Don't use too heavy a roller, as you may pack the green too firm and keep the oxygen from getting to the roots when the grass starts to grow. In cases when my greens get packed too firmly I usually get round-tooth forks and push them into the green about six inches in depth and pry them up lightly all over the green. You will find it loosens up your green and the grass grows more rapidly. I prefer this method better than the spiked roller. Of course, it is much slower, but I think the better of the two methods.

This spiking I usually do in early Spring and after loosening the green I top dress it preferably with sand only. But I can't always get sand, owing to the expense of it, and I usually use two yards of light soil and one of sand, which makes a fairly light, sharp dressing. If anyone cares to try my methods and can get sand easily, use sand only as it goes down into the holes the fork makes and keeps the green open, allowing plenty of oxygen to get to the roots.

HOW TOPDRESSING IS PREPARED

REGARDING my topdressing, I usually start to haul the stock-pen fertilizer during the very hot weather every year (about 100 cubic yards), as my fairways don't need so much cutting, because we have no fairway sprinkling system. When I have it all piled up at the barn out in an open stack about two feet high, I usually get a good rain on it. If not, I put a sprinkler on it.

After I get it nicely moistened I go round the edges of the lake, which has been reduced in area owing to the hot weather and plough up all the silt and cover my fertilizer about six inches thick and let it lay there until the next Spring. In fact I don't even use it then, but turn it over as I usually have enough compost lying there ready for next Summer. That means my dressing has laid for two years, which gives it a good chance to rot well and let all weed seed sprouts get killed with the heat; that prevents taking weed seed to the greens when dressing.

I hope my article will be considered beneficial enough by you to be put in your magazine and that its readers may derive a little help from my methods of keeping Bermuda greens. I am not in the least sensitive to severe criticism by any of your readers who have Bermuda greens and if they see any weak spots in my methods, will be glad to hear their ways.