Annual Meeting of the Green Section

The annual meeting of the permanent members and delegates to the Green Section of the United States Golf Association will be held at the Drake Hotel, Chicago, at 2 p. m. Friday, January 8, 1926. The annual meeting of the United States Golf Association will be held the day following at 4 p. m. at the same place. This will make it possible to devote the afternoon of January 8 and the forenoon of the following day to Green Section matters. Each member club of the Green Section is urged to be represented at the meetings by its delegates, and to send also its greenkeeper and members of its green committee as far as possible. There will be both formal and informal discussions of matters of interest in greenkeeping and in the furtherance of the work of the Green Section. An interesting and instructive program will be provided, one feature of which will be a symposium on the subject of vegetative putting greens.

The Playing Quality of Vegetative Bent Greens

By George Sargent, Scioto Country Club, Columbus, Ohio

Bent stolon putting greens have certainly caused a lot of discussion during the past season. As with lots of other things on this earth of ours, at first sight it seemed to everyone that in the vegetative bent green we had found perfection, while on second sight one felt that after all it did not pay to try to build castles in the air and that it is much better to start one’s foundation on solid ground.

A good bent green has always been accepted as the best type of putting green that is humanly attainable. Before the discovery of the stolon method of producing bent greens, the only two methods known of getting a bent green were either to grow it from seed or to cut patches from fairways and transfer them to the putting greens. Each of these methods was so slow that it required almost an entire lifetime for a greenkeeper to get a real bent green. This lack of speed naturally did not meet with the approval of either the chairmen of green committees or golfers in general. The result was that clubs had to be more or less content with the cow-pasture style of putting greens, with a mixture of whatever you could get to grow—usually bluegrass, redtop, and clover, with probably a patch of bent here and a patch of fescue at some other place. The main thing then about the upkeep of putting greens was to get the grass to live through the summer and to keep it in such condition that it presented a fairly decent putting surface.

It is small wonder then that when the bent stolon method of establishing putting green turf was discovered, golfers in general, with a 20-year-old bent putting green in mind, jumped to the conclusion that days of bad putting greens were about over, as with the new vegetative method of planting bent greens such a green could be established in a few weeks or months and with assurance that a real bent putting green would be produced. It happened however that too many rushed headlong into the new method without inquiring much as to where they were going, with the result that they fell head over heels and are now busy picking themselves up. These mistakes have given critics a wonderful opportunity to swing their hammers; and bent stolon putting greens have been knocked pretty badly during the past year.
The criticism is not from a grass-growing standpoint. All are agreed that the vegetative method is the easiest way there is to grow grass. The criticism is from the playing standpoint, the claims being made that it is almost impossible to tell how the ball will roll on greens of this kind, that the grass on a vegetative bent putting green runs along the ground and forms a grain which is liable to travel in any direction, that in putting against the grain the ball will hardly roll at all while in putting with the grain the ball slips along and does not know when to stop, and that in allowing for a borrow the ball is just as likely to get into the grain of the grass and instead of falling off down hill goes up the hill in the direction opposite to that intended.

Some greenkeepers do not look at a putting green from the player's standpoint. As long as the green looks nice and pretty, it is a pretty good putting green anyhow. And that is why bent stolon greens are being so roundly "cussed out" by a lot of our crack players. A putting green should be exactly what the name implies, and that is, a green to putt on. If it does not putt well, regardless of how nice and pretty it may look, it will never be accepted as a putting green. It is much better to have something on which the ball rolls as it should. If on the other hand you can get a green that puts well and is beautiful to look at, then you have something as nearly ideal as it is humanly possible to get in a putting green; but the putting qualities must come first.

Without doubt, the vegetative bent green has the best putting green possibilities of anything in this country. A fescue green is also very good, but on the average it is harder to grow and maintain. The Green Section has discovered how to grow a bent green in at least as short a time as any putting green can be grown. The vegetative method is a very easy way to grow grass. People with little or no previous grass experience can grow it if given a few directions. The important thing is, to make it putt well. And in spite of all the criticism to the contrary, a putting green grown from stolon bents is just as easy, if not easier, to make into a good putting green than is a green produced from any other kind of grass. Certainly, also, you can get a first-class putting green more quickly, very much more quickly, than by using any other method.

The main points in the care of vegetative bent greens are close cutting and topdressing. Get these points clearly into your head and you will understand why a bent green must positively be cut closely, namely that a blade of bent grass is not strong enough to stand straight up after it gets more than $\frac{1}{12}$ inch long. Watch your greens carefully every day for the tendency of the grass to what you may term "topple over." The moment you see this condition arising, cut the grass below the point that is toppling. When bent is growing rapidly it will grow faster each day than the rate at which you are cutting it. If you are cutting off $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of grass each day and the grass is growing 5-16 inch, it will not take long for the bent to reach the toppling-over stage. Setting the knife blade lower will not correct this; the only remedy is to cut twice on the same day. Bent grass is so thick that the mower can not go down into it; therefore, when the grass is too long, it must be cut off in two layers. If you do not cut the bent before it topples over, then your greens will have a grain that makes it next to impossible for the ball to roll correctly. Topdress and fertilize your vegetative greens according to
instructions from the Green Section, with such variations as your experience indicates are best.

There is nothing to fear in using the stolon method of growing bent putting greens. But don't buy a pig in the poke; see the stolons before you buy, and be very, very sure that you are getting a suitable strain of creeping bent grass.

Remarkable Bent Turf

Mr. W. W. Baker, of the Walla Walla Country Club, Walla Walla, Wash., sends us the photograph of the accompanying illustration. This is turf grown from South German mixed bent on soil that is rather decidedly alkaline. The grass was planted "in strict accordance with instructions laid down by the Green Section," Mr. Baker writes. "The sod was stripped," he continues, "for the purpose of changing the contour of the green for better drainage and other reasons, and was replaced as soon as the change was completed, and is now in good playing condition. The texture of this grass is absolutely perfect and compact, as will be observed by the fact that the strip shown in the photograph, which is 1 1/4 inches thick and 10 inches wide, supports its own weight when suspended at each end. In this connection I wish to say that this sod was cut at the speed of 150 feet to the minute to the exact width of 10 inches and thickness of 1 1/4 inches. This was accomplished by the use of a homemade machine of very moderate cost. The design of this machine will be submitted to you later, should you consider it of sufficient interest to golf clubs to illustrate in your columns. Transferring of sod from the nursery to replace infected or worn-out greens is slow and expensive work as ordinarily done by hand."

The Idea Grows.—The New Zealand Golf Association is considering favorably the establishment of a Green Section for that country, based on a study of the United States Golf Association Green Section.