

Maintaining and Fertilizing Bermuda Grass Fairways

By Howard Beckett

The dominant grass in our fairways at the Capital City Country Club at Atlanta is, naturally, Bermuda grass, although during the winter and spring months we have a fine growth of rye-grass and Japanese clover. Seven or eight years ago these fairways were just about as poor as most fairways are here in the South, but today they are better than any others I have seen in this section, and this condition I attribute to the fertilizer we have applied and to the fairway tractor which we have used for the past five summers. Our soil is a very poor clay, which has a tendency to dry out rapidly after a rain and get very hard, and for this reason we use a tractor mower with large wheels studded with 1½-inch spikes. By going over the fairways twice a week with this tractor mower, the turf is kept in good condition, the Bermuda grass being thus given a better opportunity to spread and the fertilizer being permitted to go down to the roots of the grass.

We fertilize all our fairways every fall with raw bone meal, applying about one ton of meal per acre, and using a regular two-wheel spreader drawn by a pair of mules. In the spring the extremely bad spots in the fairways are sprigged with Bermuda grass and covered heavily with barnyard manure. In fact, all bare spots where the Bermuda looks poor are covered with manure.

Since using bone meal we have noticed a great deal more white clover in the fairways. We use this same method in planting our tees, but for fertilizer on the tees we use tankage, applied during the growing season, as it seems to be quicker in action than is bone meal.

Briefly, best results seem to be achieved by plenty of cutting during the growing season, and in the fall and spring the abundant use of organic fertilizer.

A compost pile at each putting green, under cover of a shed, screened from view by trees and shrubbery, would be ideal for the sake of convenience. But this is not possible on many golf courses, due to lack of proper screening. The ideal may be approximated to a certain extent, nevertheless, by locating compost piles, preferably under shed cover, wherever possible on the course conveniently situated with reference to one or a group of greens.

No free acid in superphosphate.—In connection with the change of the trade name of "acid phosphate" to the original term "superphosphate," which has been approved by the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists and by the National Fertilizer Association, the attention of this department has been called to statements occurring in department publications of 20 or more years ago to the effect that acid phosphate was a cause of acidity in certain eastern soils. Dr. Henry G. Knight, chief of the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, says that research has shown that the properly manufactured superphosphate (acid phosphate) of recent years contains no free acid, and that the evidence brought out by fertilizer experiments made by the department and by several state experiment stations shows that superphosphate (acid phosphate) is not a cause of acidity in soils and in most cases does not change the reaction of the soil appreciably one way or the other.—*The Official Record, United States Department of Agriculture, March 21, 1928, Vol. 7, No. 12, p. 1.*

AS WE FIND THEM

After playing golf in Dreamland we stopped in to attend the convention of the Amalgamated Order of Golf Course Grasses.

The controlling faction at the convention was Kentucky blue-grass, with delegates representing most states from rough, fairways, greens, bunkers, sand traps, sidewalks—almost everywhere.

The “farm bloc” of Rhode Island bent pointed out that their group played a big part in the country’s basic industry of farming (in pastures) and that their importance should be more fully recognized on the fairways where “big business” tramped.

The “progressives,” headed by *Poa annua*, kept breaking in on every group, and many times threatened to disrupt every effort at uniformity of action.

There was a “dry” faction from the Far West that wanted to put through a regulation prohibiting artificial watering, for they maintained grass could thrive simply on the “liquid nature provided.”

The “wet” element of the East, especially the creeping bent class, all insisted that in dry weather golfers owed them a drink—at least once a day—and they would continue to insist upon it.

As is customary at all such gatherings, there was much grumbling about the weather, but no action was taken to improve it.

Red fescue insisted on having a ruling prohibiting hot summer weather, whereas Bermuda grass and some of its followers insisted that hot weather be demanded at all times.

After much such wrangling, the discussion turned to greenkeepers, green committees, and golfers in general. That topic brought harmony to the convention. The delegates were unanimous in deciding that:

“Man is a queer, stupid beast. He never can agree on any one treatment for all classes in his own big family, but when he deals with anything else, especially a big assortment of grasses, he expects them all to want the same thing and all to respond in the same cheerful manner to the same treatment.”