

Winter Rules

The winter and early spring months always give those in charge of golf courses in the northern half of the United States the unpleasant task of dealing with some unreasonable members who feel that membership in a club should carry with it absolute freedom in the use of all parts of the house and grounds. There are, of course, many ways of restraining such unbridled enthusiasts, but it is doubtful that any method has proven entirely effective while still preserving "peace and good will."

Our attention has been called to a method used at the Columbia Country Club, Chevy Chase, Md., which may appeal to others faced with this problem. An appeal by the green committee to the golfing members of the club was distributed in the form of an attractively printed folder. The purpose was to educate the players to a better understanding of the whys and wherefores of one of those mysterious actions of the ever-puzzling green committee. The folder reads as follows:

"Owing to the adverse conditions, from a maintenance standpoint, to which the golf course is subjected under our climatic conditions in the late winter and early spring, it may be found necessary at times to close the course for a day or two in order to protect the turf and the soil and preserve a satisfactory surface for subsequent play.

"It is desired that you be acquainted with the reasons for closing the course at such times as you may find the 'Golf Course Closed' sign posted in your locker room though the weather is fine overhead. It is the desire of those charged with the maintenance of your golf course, not to restrict your privileges thereon but to protect the course from injury that may be caused by play during the infrequent intervals in which the turf is very soft.

"The alternate freezing and thawing of the soil during the late winter and early spring months is one of nature's greatest aids to golf course maintenance in this latitude. This weathering process restores the natural granular structure of the soil by breaking up the hard, packed mass that results from the heavy play and the trampling by laborers and packing by equipment during the summer and autumn months. This granular condition of the soil is very essential to the proper development of the turf grasses and to the durability of the turf, and if the course is allowed to rest from the time the frost leaves the ground until the soil settles naturally and the surface moisture has evaporated, the surface will be left smooth and the soil in ideal condition for growing grass when the season for growth begins. On the other hand, if the course is used while the frost is leaving and the soil is very soft and soggy, this newly restored granular structure will be broken down before the grass has gotten the benefit of it. Aside from the interference to this natural turf expedient, many of the grass roots that serve to feed the grass and bind it into the mass known as turf are broken by pressure of the foot as it sinks into the soft soil, and a considerable period of the early growing season is required for nature to repair this injury.

"Another matter which is of more concern from a player's standpoint is the rough, bumpy surface of the putting greens and fairways resulting from deep foot impressions made by the players and caddies when playing on the course immediately after a thaw. A few players

and their caddies at such times may leave the putting greens in very bad condition for themselves and others who may wish to play after the ground has dried out. A bumpy surface on a putting green is difficult to overcome, and usually when such a condition occurs in the late winter or early spring a good part of the best golfing season has passed before that very desirable true surface can be restored.

"These are some of the reasons why the unwelcome sign 'Golf Course Closed' may be found at your club occasionally; but be assured that this will not occur more often nor for any longer periods than is deemed absolutely essential for your maximum enjoyment of the course during the golfing season.

"When in doubt as to the condition of the course, a telephone call to the club may save a disappointing trip or a wasted day.

"Yours for the best golf course possible, and for you the best golfing season ever!"

Stepladder tees.—These ancient relics may still be found on occasional golf courses. It is next to impossible to grow grass uniformly on them, and if the grass does grow in spots it is an expensive task to keep it mowed. It would be economy to obliterate the steps by filling them in with soil and reducing the incline, and would add much to the attractiveness of the tee and its surroundings. We have seen tees twelve feet high easily reached by an incline and the turf kept in an excellent condition.

Tricky holes or shots are never good ones.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

All questions sent to the Green Section will be answered in a letter to the writer as promptly as possible. The more interesting of these questions, with concise answers, will appear in this column. If your experience leads you to disagree with any answer given in this column, it is your privilege and duty to write to the Green Section.

While most of the answers are of general application, please bear in mind that each recommendation is intended specifically for the locality designated at the end of the question.

The relation of fertilizers to the growth of clover.—Does cottonseed meal introduce clover on soils where legumes occur naturally?—(Colorado.)

ANSWER.—Cottonseed meal in itself would not introduce clover, but if clover seed gets into a green through top-dressing or by natural distribution the 3 per cent of phosphoric acid and 2 per cent of potash contained in the meal would favor the development of the clover. At the same time some phosphoric acid and some potash are necessary for the best development of grass, especially on soils which may be deficient in one or both of these fertilizing constituents. The compost with which putting greens are fertilized usually takes care of this need, but occasionally on some soils a deficiency of phosphoric acid or potash is shown by the quick and vigorous growth of grass after one or both of these fertilizing elements are supplied. An excess of either phosphoric acid or potash would stimulate the growth of clover and