Instruction in Greenkeeping Given at State Colleges

In this issue of the Bulletin are given descriptions of five short courses of instruction in greenkeeping at five state agricultural colleges and experiment stations. In addition to these short courses, at least one agricultural college includes in its regular curriculum for the 4-year college student a special course in which the problems of turf production are given particular attention. This special course is described in the Bulletin by Professor Curtis, of Cornell University.

The propagation of good turf for golf courses or other purposes has in recent years been placed on an entirely changed status due first, to higher standards demanded by club members, and second, to the introduction of new machinery and scientific methods which have become necessary in handling the many problems faced by those who care for turf. The United States Golf Association Green Section has taken the leadership in the application of scientific principles to turf production, and its success in this field has led to an ever increasing interest in this type of work and to a greater demand for more information. For years there have been many who felt that the Green Section should establish schools where greenkeepers and others interested in turf growing might avail themselves of the opportunity to study by means of lectures and laboratory exercises some of the recent developments in turf culture. However, such instruction calls for certain accommodations in the way of lecture rooms and laboratories with suitable equipment. Such facilities have not been available to the Green Section, but are readily available in many of the state agricultural colleges where such courses are part of the regular routine work. Those who have applied to the Green Section for such instruction have always been directed to get in touch with the courses that are available in the agricultural colleges. When called upon to do so, the Green Section has always rendered every possible service to those who have conducted these short courses, and members of its staff will take part in the programs of three of the short courses offered in 1931.

Short courses in a great variety of subjects have been in operation in many of our state colleges for years. Almost every specialized subject of agriculture is taken into consideration in the short courses offered by the various state agricultural colleges. The first short course in which the problems of the greenkeeper were given chief consideration was conducted by the Massachusetts Agricultural College, at Amherst, under the supervision of Professor Dickinson. In the spring of 1929 the New Jersey and Pennsylvania State agricultural colleges gave short courses of instruction primarily for greenkeepers and park superintendents. In 1930 the Wisconsin agricultural experiment station added to its program a short course for greenkeepers. In February, 1931, the Michigan College of Agriculture will be the fifth state college to give such a short course. The large attendance at these several greenkeepers' programs has clearly indicated the interest in such educational features and shows the attitude that the modern greenkeeper takes toward such instruction.

The short-course movement, like any movement that involves progress, has had its full share of criticism. There are many who attempt to discredit these courses and condemn them on the grounds that greenkeeping can not be learned in a class room. This truth is

fully recognized by even the most enthusiastic supporter of short courses. It must be remembered, however, that although the short course for greenkeepers is relatively new, the short-course principle is now well established as a feature of agricultural college programs. The farmer recognizes very well that he or his son can not learn all about the dairy business, poultry raising, or other agricultural subjects merely by attendance at a short course of instruction. Each year indicates, however, that the farmers recognize the value of such courses as an adjunct to their practical experiences. The need for practical experience and information is certainly as important in farming as it is in greenkeeping, and anyone who understands the American farmer recognizes that this practical side is thoroughly understood. Practical farmers for their part realize that in these days of scientific progress technical information most readily obtainable in college lecture rooms and laboratories can be of great value if placed at the disposal of individuals with enough judgment to put those principles to practical application. The big majority of greenkeepers who attended these courses undoubtedly returned to their clubs better greenkeepers. It is true, there are always students in any college class, whether it be in a short course or an advanced course, who are deprived of the benefits of such instruction, due to the antagonistic and disparaging mental attitude with which they approach the subject. However, the large number of greenkeepers who have attended these short courses from year to year indicates that those who have entered into the proper spirit of the short course have recognized that there is something to be gained from it.

The Green Section recently received a letter from a greenkeeper who apparently has taken the broad-minded viewpoint of short courses. He wrote that he had in different years attended the short courses given in the state colleges of Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and during 1931 he hoped to attend a short course conducted by another institution. It is evident that this greenkeeper recognized fully the advantage of getting as many viewpoints as possible in enabling him to understand more fully the problems that he faced from day to day on his golf course. Green committees that have the right kind of men as greenkeepers can probably do their club no greater service than to encourage their greenkeepers to attend these courses and make provisions for the payment by their clubs of the expenses involved.

The length of time over which seeds may retain their viability while buried in soil is an important problem in weed control and in storage of seed of desirable crops for future use. Much experimental work of this kind is now being undertaken by the United States Department of Agriculture and its cooperators. At the Michigan Agricultural College a test has been under way for 40 years, and it was found that after the expiration of this period of time one-half of the seeds used in the experiment retained their ability to germinate. In another test, conducted at Arlington, Va., at the end of 20 years 51 of the 107 kinds of seed buried in soil were viable. As a rule, grass seeds are relatively short lived; fescue especially loses its germination rapidly.

The prime essential for a good putting green is proper drainage.