

OUR LETTER BOX

The Green Section receives numerous inquiries concerning local turf problems and is always glad to reply to them. With the hope that some of these questions and answers may be helpful to others besides the original correspondent, a few of them will be published. While most of the answers will have a general application, it should be remembered that each recommendation is intended for the locality designated at the end of the question.

Control of snowmold.—The end of our playing season comes rather early in the year, usually at the end of September. The ground gradually becomes frozen and sometimes we have snow covering our greens from the second week in October to the second or third week in April. When the snow is melting in the spring, some of our turf is covered in spots with a cobwebby fungus growth. The spots are from 6 to 9 inches in diameter and the grass usually dies. These spots may expand and merge and eventually the turf takes on a mottled or patchwork effect. Is this snowmold and what is the best remedy? (Ontario.)

ANSWER. — Undoubtedly the damage you describe is due to snowmold. The most effective control of snowmold involves the following principles:

1. Use no winter cover, such as straw or leaves.
2. Provide for a rapid run-off of water as the snow melts.

3. Use resistant grasses. Seaside bent and fescue are very susceptible.

4. Protect the turf by fall applications of corrosive sublimate.

5. Avoid late summer or early fall applications of fertilizers, which tend to stimulate a late growth of grass.

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Resodding a green of established Bermuda grass.—The area on which we intend to build a green is already well sodded with Bermuda grass. This grass is used exclusively in this section for sodding greens. Must we dig up this old grass and replant or can we keep mowing it down close until the tender shoots start to grow? (Texas.)

ANSWER.—If the area you intend to use for turf is now well covered with Bermuda grass, keep it mowed closely and new shoots should soon thicken the turf so that it will be satisfactory for putting green purposes. The process can be has-

tened by applying sulfate of ammonia at the rate of 5 to 10 pounds to 1,000 square feet. Apply when the grass is dry and water it in. After mowing it would be well to rake the ground severely with a garden rake or topdress liberally with fresh soil. If necessary to thicken the sod, the surface can be leveled and Bermuda grass seed sown. The turf should then be kept well watered for a time.

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Bumpy turf.—Our greens were planted vegetatively with Washington bent 7 years ago. This season the players are complaining that the greens are bumpy and that the surfaces are very uneven. Will you please advise us how often the greens should be topdressed and give us other information on the accepted practices of maintaining this grass? (New York.)

ANSWER.—From the standpoint of growth of grass, topdressing is desirable but by no means necessary. From the putting standpoint, however, topdressing is distinctly desirable since it provides a true putting surface.

It is well to topdress greens whenever the surfaces become uneven. This occurs more frequently on some types of soil than on others. Golf courses are definitely affected by the

amount of play. No set rule can therefore be laid down as to the frequency of topdressing that is best for any set of greens. Sometimes topdressing is applied to surfaces that are badly matted and the topdressing, therefore, has no chance to work down into the lower layers. In such cases the more often greens are topdressed the more irregular they may become.

In handling Washington bent greens it is a common practice to rake or brush the greens severely to remove as much of the excess growth as possible and thereby enable the topdressing material to work down into the low areas where it is matted in. If there is a tendency to produce an excessive amount of mat the raking or brushing process may be repeated throughout the summer every week or two. In the summer, rakings or brushings should be very mild, however. Topdressing is applied as needed and thoroughly matted in.

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Coarseness of redtop.—Can you tell us if redtop will start out coarse in the spring and gradually get finer because of cutting as the summer progresses? (Colorado.)

ANSWER.—Redtop ordinarily does not get finer during the summer. At seeding time redtop and

many of the bents try to send up flower heads even in closely cut turf. The leaves attached to these flowering stalks are especially coarse. These will usually disappear by mid-summer although the regular leaves of the redbtop will remain coarser than those of some of the other turf grasses.

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Slime mold on grass.—On our lawn there have suddenly appeared irregular shaped growths which are taffy-colored at first and later become black. When the lawn mower goes over the grass a fine black soot-like material blows over the lawn. Will you please tell me what this growth is and how to get rid of it? (Ohio.)

ANSWER.—The soot-like development which you describe is one of the fungi known as slime mold. It is a superficial growth which grows on grass when the conditions of temperature and moisture are favorable for its development. The black dust-like material consists of very fine grains which are the spores and act as seed to propagate the fungus. Ordinarily the fungus grows in the soil and is not detected until it suddenly sends up the fruiting bodies which you have observed. At first these fruiting bodies may be the

large irregular, light brown or grey masses or tiny steel grey bodies, sometimes hundreds of them on a single grass blade or clover leaf. Both types of fruiting bodies mature rapidly and break open, exposing the masses of black spores inside. When mowers run over these areas they spread the spores over a large area of turf. Ordinarily if you take a hose at that stage you can rinse this black dust off the grass and you will find that it causes no permanent damage to the grass.

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Commercial fertilizer vs. manure for topdressing turf.—We have had quite a bit of discussion about whether it is better to use sewage sludge or cow or horse manure when top-dressing the fairways on our course. We have no means of sterilizing the manure and must spread it by hand. We should be grateful for any advice you can give us. (Florida.)

ANSWER.—All our experimental work has shown that for fairway fertilizing it is better to use sewage sludge or some commercial fertilizers than cow or horse manure as top-dressing.

