

WHAT IS A GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT?

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HAVE you ever given a thought to the qualifications of your golf course superintendent? He is a person of many accomplishments. Supervising the maintenance of a golf course in these days presents a diversity of problems. As the technology related to various phases of maintenance grows, the superintendent finds himself hard-pressed to keep abreast well enough to take advantage of the better techniques and materials.

Of all the things that a golf course superintendent must be, he must be first a *grower of grass*. Growing grass under golf course conditions implies a knowledge of many things. The possession of a "green thumb" is not enough, though it may be helpful. A superintendent must know how grass grows. He must be acquainted with the various species, both permanent and weedy types, and their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Nutrition

The successful grass grower must understand the nutritional requirements of plants, the nutrient supplying ability of his soil, and the kinds of fertilizer which will provide the most satisfactory and economical sources of supplementary nutrients. Water needs must be met and understood. This is perhaps one of the most difficult of the management problems. In the process of insuring that grass receives an adequate supply of moisture but that water is not allowed to "drown" plants, a superintendent must become thoroughly familiar with irrigation and drainage techniques and practices.

Growing grass for the sake of the plant itself requires a certain amount of knowledge, but growing grass to perform the functions of a golf course turf imposes a much more exacting set of conditions and an infinitely greater degree of understanding of the abilities and limitations of the species with which one deals. Mowing is a

common practice and one to which the layman gives little thought. Mowing is the practice, however, whereby grass is transformed into a usable turf. Good technique in mowing is essential. One need only notice the damage caused by an inexperienced putting green mower operator to appreciate the necessity of proper technique. Mowing the grass even 1/16 of an inch closer than normal can be ruinous to putting greens in some seasons of the year.

The control of pests on the golf course is much more efficient than it was 20 years ago, but the greater efficiency results from more "know how" on the part of the superintendent. There are numerous fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides available to the turf grower, but few of them can be used as general purpose control materials. Nearly all of them are selective in their action to some extent. Knowing which material will provide the best control most economically and with the least danger to the plant and to the workman is a matter requiring a thorough acquaintanceship with the materials, and sound judgment. Perhaps it is not necessary for the superintendent to be a chemist, a plant physiologist and a toxicologist all at the same time, but he is dealing almost daily with complex materials that can produce serious effects upon the plants and upon the workmen. It is necessary for him to have as thorough a knowledge as possible of his materials.

In conjunction with his primary duties of producing a turf which will be usable and pleasurable, a superintendent must be a general maintenance man. He must be capable of supervising or wisely contracting the construction and repair of parking facilities, shelter houses, bridges, installation and repair of drinking fountains, roads, walks, barns, sheds, etc. He must supervise the installation and repair of irrigation and drainage facilities; and he must supervise the planting and care of trees, shrubs and flowers.

LOUISIANA TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION



The Louisiana Turfgrass Association was organized September 12, 1956, at the Southwestern Louisiana Institute, Lafayette, Louisiana. Lou G. Vickers, of the Metairie Country Club of New Orleans, was elected president. Dr. J. M. Peek, Associate Professor of Agronomy, Southwestern Louisiana Institute, was elected secretary-treasurer and research director.

The Association plans to hold an annual turfgrass conference and field day at the Institute. Turfgrass plots have been established and a turfgrass research program under the direction of Dr. J. M. Peek is underway. The formation of this Association greatly strengthens turfgrass management in the Southeast. At the present time there are three turfgrass associations which hold annual conferences. Eight superintendent associations are also active in the Southeast.

Needs Businesslike Methods

These are the obvious requirements of a golf course superintendent. However, these requirements lack a great deal in comprising a complete description of his job.

He must have some ability as a business executive. He supervises a plant which represents a large investment by club members and which is worth a great deal of money. It is worth money because of the excellence of the turf, the beauty of the trees, shrubs and the smooth operation of the maintenance facilities. The worth of such an establishment is, however, dependent upon constant vigilance and constant maintenance. Businesses which deal with inanimate subjects may be suspended for

short times without a serious decrease in value. A temporary suspension of operations in golf course maintenance would be disastrous.

A golf course superintendent must use businesslike methods in the preparation of a budget, in the preparation of reports to his governing committee concerning the details of his operations, and in the keeping of records. The records include those of costs of equipment, supplies, materials and labor; inventory records; records of use of supplies and operation of equipment; records of practices performed on the golf course (such as dates of application of fertilizer, fungicides, etc.); records of soil analyses; and records of weather conditions.

Must Manage Labor Efficiently

A golf course superintendent must be a manager of labor. His is the job of procuring sufficient labor (frequently within the limits of a barely adequate budget), training the men to perform their duties properly and efficiently, and of supervising their activities. The efficient use of labor probably is the area in which the greatest advances could be made towards increased efficiency and economy in golf course maintenance.

There are numerous reasons why golf course labor is not more efficient. Many clubs keep only a skeleton crew during the winter. This necessitates the procurement and training of a new group of men each spring. A laborer who is satisfied to accept seasonal employment is not likely to take readily to the training required to attain an appreciable degree of skill in golf course maintenance. Consequently, the superintendent may have to hire and screen a considerable number of men in order to find a few satisfactory workmen.

Even where a club is operated with a stable and well-trained crew, there is room for improved efficiency. The maintenance of a golf course requires a great many distinct operations which are scattered over a large area. For instance, the man who changes cups and tee markers must visit every green and every tee. He does relatively little work and spends only a short time at each location but his locations are scattered over 120 acres or more. All the greens must be visited by the operator of the greensmower. If the collars are kept at an intermediate height they must be visited by the man who mows collars. Unless work is extremely well planned, there is likely to be a great deal of wasted time and motion.

Cooperation is Essential

Cooperation between the golf course superintendent, the pro, and the manager is essential. These are the men in charge of the three main phases of golf and country club operation. Any lack of cooperation between these three results in less pleasure for club members.

COMING EVENTS

1956

November 12-16

American Society of Agronomy Meetings
Cincinnati, Ohio

December 10-11-12

11th Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference
Oklahoma A. & M. College
Stillwater, Oklahoma Dr. Wayne W. Huffine

December 10-11-12

11th Annual Texas Turfgrass Conference
Texas A. & M. College
College Station, Texas Dr. Ethan C. Holt

1957

January 17-18

Mid-Atlantic Annual Turf Conference
Lord Baltimore Hotel
Baltimore, Maryland Dr. George S. Langford

January 21-24

Rutgers University Turf School
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, N. J. Dr. Ralph E. Engel

February 10-15

Golf Course Superintendents 28th National Turfgrass Conference and Show
Kentucky Hotel
Louisville, Kentucky Agar M. Brown

February 18-21

Penn State Turfgrass Conference
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pa. Prof. H. B. Musser

February 27-28-March 1:

Minnesota Turf Conference
28th Annual Meeting
Minneapolis, Minn.

Cooperative effort goes hand in hand with keeping others concerned with the club activities informed. Evidence of a superintendent's cooperative attitude may be expressed in the form of informative notes relative to course operation which he may discuss with the professional, the manager, and the chairman of his committee, and which he may place on the bulletin board.

The superintendent must find the plane upon which he can meet and discuss his problems with his employers. No two superintendents may be able to meet the situation in exactly the same way. It is important, however, that the superintendent be able to maintain the confidence of the membership in his work. Most often this can be done by keeping the members informed and by presenting good reasons for his activities when asked. Many superin-

tendents find that their presence in the locker room on a busy afternoon is helpful in satisfying members who may have complaints about the course.

The better superintendents of this day feel the need of sharing knowledge with one another. They cooperate in educational endeavors. They attend turf conferences and local superintendents association meetings. New information relative to products and practices is being developed constantly. One cannot afford to pass up his opportunities to gain new knowledge if he is to remain at the top of his profession. The better superintendent seeks ways whereby education may be employed to raise the standards of his profession along with the men engaged in it.

Last, and perhaps most important, a superintendent must be a planner. He must have long range plans. These must be arrived at through discussion with members of his governing committee. Long range plans will pass from one group to another and should be put on record for the future consideration of succeeding committees.

There must be yearly plans. These are necessary for accurate budgeting. And there must be weekly and daily plans. Thorough planning makes any job easier and provides for more efficient accomplishment. Plans must be changed at times, but the very existence of a plan makes an undertaking one which will progress in an orderly fashion toward a definite conclusion rather than a haphazard activity which may or may not reach a desired objective.

Mr. Club Member, do you realize what you expect your superintendent to be? If you are so fortunate as to have a superintendent who performs his many duties well, treat him kindly, and express your appreciation. He is deserving of your respect and your support.

Mr. Superintendent, do you measure up in all respects to the job which you hold? There is much help and much information available to you from numerous sources. You must take advantage of every opportunity to improve your own ability if you are to keep pace with the fellow members of your profession. The art and

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science of turf maintenance is progressing at a more rapid pace than ever before. Your job is a big one and for the leaders, there are bigger and better jobs in the future.