

Maintenance Suggestions

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What are the greenkeeping problems of the small golf club, and what is the remedy for them? That sounds like a rather large order, and yet is exceedingly simple, for such a club has but one real problem—how to exist with the revenue that is available; and the remedy is entirely a matter of applying the sound business judgment that most of the club members exercise in the administration of their private affairs.

The subject of golf course maintenance is not the mysterious and unapproachable secret that so many seem to believe it to be. Rather it is a perfectly obvious reality—a matter of ordinary farming practice. Pre-supposing intelligent planning and construction, there are just four things that your golf course needs to keep it in first class condition; weeding, fertilization, watering, and mowing. The degree to which these are done must be determined by the amount you have to spend, but all of them can be done by the club which spends \$1,500 a year on its nine holes, as well as by the club which spends \$5,000 and up.

Our worst enemies are procrastination and a tendency to quit before we ever get started. We visit some larger and wealthier club, and see them doing a hundred and one things which we can not afford to do, and the idea becomes fixed in our minds that without the same treatment our golf course will never amount to much. Or we hear that a certain club spends \$25,000 a year on its course, and we begin to figure that some such expenditure must be necessary in order to obtain any real results. I know of a dingy little hole in the wall, in one of our large cities, where you can get as good a dinner as anyone would want, for one dollar. Just around the corner is a wonderful restaurant, where an excellent meal can also be had, for five dollars. The food is not one bit better, if as good, but the patrons are more exacting. So it is, to a great extent, with golf courses. After the maintenance cost passes a certain point, it is either wasted, or it goes largely for little refinements, which add nothing to the course, but rather to the convenience of the members and the satisfaction they derive from the game.

The first step, if you really wish to get anywhere with your course, is to get a real Green Committee on the job. That does not mean merely an aggregation of well-known men, whose names will look well on paper, but a live committee of men who can and will give a great deal of time and study to the subject. This is essential, for the club of limited means, while needing one badly, can not possibly afford a high-class greenkeeper. Naturally, someone must take his place, if you are to get results, and this devolves upon the chairman of your Green Committee. He must become not a figurehead who issues vague orders, but a competent expert who knows what to do, how to do it, and why. Fortunately, this is being made easy for us through the efforts of the Green Section, which provides a clearing-house of the experience and methods of men who have made a life-study of the subject.

Probably the most important maintenance problem of the small club is the control of weeds. In most cases, this has been so long neglected that it now looms up as an almost impossible task. And yet every day that it remains untouched it becomes that much worse. The best method of han-

ding it would be to put a gang at it and get all of the weeds out. If this can not be done, put one man at it for as much of the time as you can spare him from other work, and in a short while the results will surprise you. This can be done without any additional expense by slightly neglecting other work. Whether you are mowing your fairways every other day or once a week, let it go one day longer, and use the day that is gained at weeding. Or if you have the right sort of spirit among your members, organize them into teams, and make each team responsible for the condition of one green. Get as many of them as possible out for an afternoon, each armed with a sharp piece of iron, about the shape of a chisel, and let them go to it. Once you get the weeds under control, keep them that way by devoting a couple of hours each week to taking out any new ones that may appear. It would also be wise to attend to the weeds in the fairways and rough, at any rate in the sections close to the greens; never let them go to seed, and if your mowing does not prevent this, go after them with a hoe and dig them out.

From a standpoint of neglect, the question of fertilization comes next. Like all other living things, grass must have food, and as it can not obtain enough naturally under golf course conditions, we must supply it artificially. Without any doubt, barnyard manure comes closest to being the ideal fertilizer, and, for the small club, the most readily obtainable. Very few such clubs have any compost pile, however, and what manure they use—if any—is used fresh, and becomes a source of trouble rather than of assistance. This condition is doubtless due to the fact that a sizeable compost heap represents quite an investment, which is apt to scare them away from it, and they go on using unsatisfactory fertilization, or none at all. Get a compost pile started, in a small way if necessary, and keep adding to it until you get ahead of your requirements. It is obviously impossible for most small clubs to do much more than to fertilize their greens. However, if you find yourself a little ahead at the end of the season, take in the approaches, and after that a strip across each fairway at about the point where a properly played tee shot will come to rest, or on a three-shot hole where the second shot will finish. It is rather unfortunate that the fairways can not be given the same treatment as the greens, but with a limited sum it is an impossibility; however, they do not need it as badly by quite a wide margin, for the grass is not cut so close, the clippings are not removed, and dense turf is not as essential.

The water problem is a rather troublesome one, and one that must be provided for, else you can never expect a well-conditioned course. With the water system, it is entirely a question of the initial cost, as the subsequent operating expense is so slight as to be of no importance. If city water is available, it becomes an easy matter. Pipe it up to one green, and the difference will be so marked that your membership will take care of the rest. If you have to establish your own source of supply, it becomes a more difficult problem, but a method of financing it should be found, for the dividends will be large.

Mowing, while an important consideration both from the player's and the greenkeeper's viewpoint, is more or less flexible. If anything must be sacrificed, let it be the mowing, by all means. Instead of making your other work a filler for the mowing, as is almost universally the case, reverse the process and let the mowing fill in. I do not intend to advise

serious neglect of mowing, for without question it benefits the grass, particularly during the growing season; but the player should be sacrificed rather than the course.

There is no course so hopeless that it can not be helped. Were you to list everything that your course needs, together with the probable cost, it would undoubtedly present a staggering total. Do not let this fact discourage you. If the money that is allowed your Green Committee for upkeep, whether it be one or ten thousand dollars, is properly spent, and the weak spots eliminated one at a time, you will soon find things breaking the right way; and once they start coming they will come fast.

Sodding

LYMAN CARRIER

It is often desirable to resod portions and sometimes an entire green. Where it is imperative that a green should not be taken out of play for any considerable length of time, as in a case where it is not feasible to construct a playable, temporary green, sodding offers the most feasible means of getting more desirable turf.

Every golf course that can afford to do so should maintain a turf bed of sufficient size to sod at least an average green. This turf should be kept at all times in putting condition. Emergencies will arise when it will be highly desirable. It offers a feasible plan for gradually transforming the turf of mediocre greens into first-class condition at a minimum of inconvenience to the players. This is now being followed on a few courses where it is desired to change to creeping bent greens planted by the vegetative method.

The Turf Bed

The turf bed should be located out of the line of play but should have a position sufficiently conspicuous to insure its having attention. A turf bed is too often treated like a red-headed stepchild, when it should have the same care as the rest of the green family. It is not necessary to go to anything like the trouble and expense in preparing the turf bed that is usually done in constructing a green. Provided the land is fairly level, free from stones, and naturally drained, all that is necessary is to plow, then harrow, and work it down to a firm, fine, even seed bed. If the soil is poor, some manure or bone meal should be added. Stones interfere with the lifting of the turf. Wet or poor ground will not give satisfactory turf. If the bed is on a side hill it will be more difficult to use a sod-lifting machine. Weak turf can not be handled satisfactorily. The seeding or planting should be the same as for a green.

Preparing a Green for Sodding

The soil on which sod is to be laid should be firm. Where the green does not have to be rebuilt, all that is necessary in the way of preparation is to scalp off the old turf and smooth the surface with garden rakes. It seldom happens, however, that it is not desirable to reconstruct the green that is to be sodded. Many turf troubles are due to faulty construction, as well as the use of seed of inferior grasses. The faults should be corrected,