RENOVATION OF POOR TURF

Extremes of heat, cold, drought, excessive rain, humidity, disease and other acts of nature will exact a terrific toll of many of the grasses from which turf has been developed. It looks like a banner year for crabgrass. Disease has been very severe, weakening turf so that it has little or no resistance to crabgrass.

Tons of crabgrass killers will be used, much of it to little avail unless the renovated areas are established to the types of grasses which are able naturally to resist crabgrass. Unfortunately, the supplies of the truly crabgrass-resistant turf grasses are limited. Golf courses with turf nurseries have the opportunity to be out ahead by growing supplies for plugging.

August is a good time to plan the fall program and to start doing something about it. Figure the acreage and buy the chemicals. Buy the seed or sprigs or stolons or sod (whatever is needed to do the replanting). Thorough aerifying virtually insures success. Lime (if needed) and fertilizers are musts. Don't use 2,4-D just before planting. Mercury, too, will destroy small grass seedlings. If you can't water, wait for good soil moisture. After mid-August it may be too late to work with the warm-season grasses, except in the South or where it never freezes.

Remember, in a renovation program where unsatisfactory grass has been destroyed, be sure you replace it with "nothing but the best."

THE TOPSOIL MYTH

Visitors to the Plant Industry Station at Beltsville, Md., continually are amazed at the high-quality turf that the USGA Green Section is able to produce on raw subsoil. In some cases the subsoil has been worked with bulldozers while it is wet. As every agronomist knows, this does things to clay soil that are not favorable to the growth of most turf grasses. It is hoped that many more people will take the time and trouble to come to the Beltsville Turf Gardens and see that it is possible to grow perfectly satisfactory lawns on subsoil. It appears that the topsoil myth has been pretty well exploded. Many homeowners have purchased expensive topsoil when they could not afford it; now some may be relieved of this expense.

We attribute our success to: 1.) The use of improved turf grasses which are highly disease resistant, 2.) Aerifying to cultivate the soil and do the many things that help grass roots to grow, and 3.) Generous fertilization.

The final chapter on this story has not been written but considerable progress has been made. Readers are invited to send in their comments on this topic which, for some time, may be highly controversial.

COMING EVENTS