



Better Turf for Better Golf

TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

Summer Management of Putting Greens

by A. M. RADKO

Northeastern Director, USGA Green Section

AS the difficult turfgrass months of July and August approach, superintendents in the Northeastern Region begin to gird themselves to keep their putting surfaces in tiptop condition. July and August are the most difficult months for the semi-dormant bentgrasses, as the combination of high temperatures and high humidity, coupled with heavy use of the areas, provides difficult obstacles for the bentgrasses to surmount.

One management practice that has been the subject of much controversy has been that of watering putting surfaces. Most turf leaders agree that early morning watering is preferable to night watering. Early morning watering washes away the dew, which is a good nutrient culture for fungi, and tends to dry the blades of the grass plants sooner. Dew keeps grass blades wet longer, thereby providing better conditions for fungi to remain active longer on the grass blades.

Another equally important watering practice is that of lightly syringing the putting surfaces during periods of high

temperature when the evaporation rate is greater than the rate at which the plants can absorb water from the soil. It may be necessary during extreme periods to syringe the turfgrasses several times during the day in order to keep plants from wilting.

Troublesome greens—those with poor air, surface or sub-surface drainage—should be given special attention during July and August. Greens with built-in headaches tend to show symptoms of water deficiency (or excess) sooner. These greens fare best if they are hand-watered carefully.

Many putting greens in the Northeast were established from South German bentgrass seed. As South German seed contains a variety of types, it is sometimes necessary to water portions of the greens seeded to this mixture separately and in a special way. Localized dry spots occur more often in South German bentgrass greens, as some of the types present tend to thatch or mat quicker than other plants which have been established from this mixture. The best way to alleviate this condition is to aerate the localized dry spots periodically prior to watering.