



# NEWS LETTER

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*Quality is never an accident. It is always  
the result of intelligent effort. There must be  
will to produce a superior article.*

—John Ruskin.

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**OCTOBER**

**1940**

This NEWSLETTER is published monthly by the Greenkeepers Club of New England, and sent free to its members and their Green's Chairmen. Subscription price ten cents a copy, or a dollar a year.

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October, 1940

Vol. 12, No. 10

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*The ideas and opinions expressed in the subject matter of this NEWSLETTER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the members of the club as a whole.*

### HEIGHT OF CUT OF PUTTING GREENS

by Franklin Hammond

A good putting surface of turf is smooth, uniform in texture, soft enough to hold a shot but not soft enough to leave footprints to bother the following players.

One of the chief contributing factors towards bringing this condition about is the height of the cut. The right kind of grass crowded on the green and cut at a height of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " must stand up. A sharp mower properly adjusted will cut this upright grass smoothly thus bringing about the first condition above noted, **Smoothness.**

There are many kinds of grass which will not stand close cutting and for other reasons are not desirable in a green. These types are thus eliminated by close cutting making more room for the desirable kinds and limiting to some extent the number of varieties. A green having one variety only has the best chance of being uniform in texture, therefore close mowing again helps to produce a good green by eliminating the number of varieties of grass and helping to control undesirable plants in the green.

Short, stiff blades of grass resist bending and spring back into place as

soon as pressure on them is released. This slows up the ball as it strikes the green and gives better grip to the back spin. In this way a green can have all the ball-breaking or speed retarding qualities necessary without keeping the soil soft and wet. Footprints cannot persist on a green with short, stiff blades of grass. Once again, close cutting contributes to a good green surface by making it soft but not wet.

Many turf growers believe that a quarter inch cut is harmful to the health of turf because of a loss of leaf surface. No doubt this is true to some extent but a close cut grass stock will branch and produce several leaves from the same crown whereas if left long but one or two long leaves will be produced. If this is so, the leaf surface is not reduced as much as some would like to have us believe. There are some greens which have been maintained at a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " cut for ten years which show no signs of dying out.

All grasses at times show very uneven growth even in pure strains due to various reasons with which we are not concerned in this discussion. For example, here in north eastern Massachusetts the last two spring seasons have been rather poor for early starting of grass. Greens and lawns were very uneven. Close cutting helped to make the putting surface of greens smooth and uniform, where a cut of five sixteenth or over seemed to intensify the unevenness of the grass. The backward growth did not come on and the more vigorous grass seemed to stand out more than before cutting.

It is the opinion of the writer that greens cut at  $\frac{1}{4}$ " with a variation of not over one sixty-fourth of an inch above or below this figure will give better player satisfaction and can be more easily and economically maintained than with any other height of cut. They should be "brought up" on this program from the first if possible. Once the cut has been brought to  $\frac{1}{4}$ " it should be kept there throughout the season.

The following maintenance program will keep a green healthy with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " cut.

The grass plants produced from the original seeding (or stolons) are of little use after the first season. Examination of a plug from an old green will show that the green surface of ten years ago is two or more inches below the present level of the green. Those original plants are now well on their

way towards making humus for the green of today to feed upon.

If the reader agrees with the above then he should agree that we never have **old** greens, but that we are continually producing **new** greens on the same area. Grass plants reproduce from seeds or stolons (over or under ground shoots). The chances of growth from seeds in an established green under playing conditions are slim. Conditions are far from being even poor for seeds to develop here. The green grows or keeps itself in condition chiefly from stolons produced from the older plants.

Considering from now on the grass plants which reproduce over ground shoots, or runners, or stolons, as you please, these stolons, to make root growth, must be kept green, be covered with moist soil at various parts of the runners, and be firmly held.

This condition can be produced by cutting the grass short. The softer blades will be laid down, frequent mowings will keep them pressed down. A light top dressing well brushed in will cover many such runners. This dressing should be of **poor** quality light, sandy loam, not much organic matter in it and of poor fertility value. Crazy! Probably. But consider the greenhouse plant grower. He starts his cuttings in **sand**, because it packs closely around the stalks, and is not easily moved thus helping root development. Compost or top dressing rich in humus packs when it is wet and under the pressure of a man's foot, but when the pressure is released the partly decomposed soil or compost expands, lets in the air, dries out, and stops root development from stolons. For this reason top dressing rich in humus is not desirable. The decomposing grass plants of other years mixed with frequent light top dressings will keep the green supplied with all the organic matter needed. Organic matter in the top dressing will make the green soft and uneven on the surface. Excess water will be retained, the grass will grow soft and weak, making a condition just right for disease to develop. Undesirable thick root mats will be formed close to the surface.

Top dressing poor in fertility is desirable in order that the greenkeeper may know how much feeding the green is getting because he will apply all the fertilizer needed, **when** it is needed. There is nothing more upsetting to good greens maintenance than to have certain weather conditions release unex-

pected fertility just after a light feeding has been applied but before it becomes effective. Man-made compost is poor dressing for greens. Its fertilizer value is unknown, how soon, and how much of this kind of fertilizer may be released under unexpected weather conditions cannot be foretold. Keep it off the greens and save yourself a headache.

The top inch of the green is all important; below that the chief requirement is drainage. This type of green will require less water but more frequent light watering. Apply just enough water to take care of the top inch, and no more. Frequent applications does **not** mean greater cost. The sprinkling equipment of today is excellent. The greenkeeper has a wide choice of such equipment and can easily and cheaply equip his course to give the above suggested frequent light waterings at less cost than where the usual heavy night applications are in use.

With such a program of maintenance the acidity of the soil is of little importance. We are constantly building up new greens, new soil, and new grass. The active and important part of the green (the top inch) does not have time to become acid before it is left behind in the steady rebuilding of the green.

Close cutting, careful feeding, frequent topdressing and light watering keep new grass plants coming all the time. The poor strains are eliminated and the turf is better as the years go by.

The system works, as Ripley says—  
"believe it or not".

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The height of cut for bowling greens presents quite a different problem from that of putting greens.

The bowl rolls on the ground or dirt surface of the green, not on the ends of the grass blades. The grass acts only as a break or resisting material to help give the bowl more "draw." For this reason the grass, if not crowded close in the green, must be cut at a height of  $\frac{3}{8}$ ".

With velvet bent this height of cut can be reduced as soon as the green has become thick enough but with the more open types of grass the longer cut must be maintained.

Velvet bent on a bowling green will become very weedy if cut at more than  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". With this grass as soon as the green has thickened up the cut should

be gradually brought down to  $\frac{1}{4}$ " and kept there.

The longer cut will make the green look bad just in front of the "mat," due to the bruised condition caused by the bowl as it is delivered.

Just a word in regard to topdressing on the bowling green. The green must be as near level as possible and very firm. A dressing with plenty of organic matter in it will make the green soft and uneven which will present a poor bowling surface. Also such a green will be slow to dry out and delay the rolling operation, with a heavy (1500 lb.) roller, which is very essential to a good bowling surface.

### R. I. FIELD DAY

The Eleventh Annual Field Day for Greenkeepers and others interested in turf culture was held at the R. I. Experiment Station on September 23rd. The usual inspection trip to the turf plots was in charge of Dr. Odland, Dr. DeFrance, and Dr. Erwin. Many new experiments are under way, and the older experiments are being carried along until definite conclusions can be reached.

Following lunch, Dr. B. E. Gilbert presented Dr. Odland to act as toastmaster.

Sec. Charles Hartley of the R. I. Golf Association brought greetings of that association.

Past-president Ralph Rooks of the R. I. G. A. spoke on "A Golfer's Idea of an Ideal Golf Course".

Dr. F. L. Howard discussed "Fumigation of Compost for Pest and Weed Control."

Arthur Dexter, a graduate of R. I. State in 1940 gave some interesting data concerning experiments on the use of various chemicals and fertilizers in heating compost for weed control.

The usual discussion period was led by Dr. DeFrance.

At the annual meeting of the R. I. Greenkeepers' Association, the officers elected were: President, Oscar Chapman; Vice President, Patrick Tameo; Secretary, Dr. DeFrance; and Treasurer, Martin Greene. Percy J. Boynton of Beaver Tail G. C. was elected to membership.

Following the regular program of the day, many went to the Point Judith C. C., to play and inspect the Piper velvet greens there.

### WOODRUFF FIELD DAY

Part of a letter from C. W. Baker of F. H. Woodruff & Sons describes the annual Field Day held on the Turf Plots at Milford, Conn. on September 3rd.

As for the Field Day itself, the object is to acquaint our dealers and their customers, also any consumer type of customer which we may have, namely recreation, cemetery and park superintendents; golf course greenkeepers, etc. as to what we are doing on turf investigation. We have never attempted to compete with the average experiment station, nor do we attempt to have all of the detailed information which they glean from their various efforts, however, being a commercial seedhouse we have always felt that the customer was entitled to try on the suit before he bought it, and as a result we have just about every grass that is commercially available, and many that are not, as well as combinations which we sell as commercial trade brands, all growing under normal growing conditions. In turn we have them under various types of maintenance to see what they will do.

In all we have something over 200 plots of grass, and each year we try to have one day when everyone is welcome to come and go over these trials as a group. Usually we start the meeting at eleven o'clock and it requires approximately two hours to go over the trials and they then have a hot chicken dinner, put on by our caterer, in the big tent. Music is available and during the afternoon they can go out on inspection trips of the trials and our equipment used in maintaining these, or to our stimulating refreshment bar.

We had approximately 285 fellows here this year, and a good time was observed by all.

A letter from Director Ray Koon of the Waltham Field Station tells us that "through the efforts of Harry Hood and the generosity of Orville Clapper, our much delayed mower was provided us for cutting our fairway." Most of our readers will realize that this refers to the experimental fairway started at the Waltham Station with funds appropriated by the Greenkeepers Club. We are indebted to Mr. Hood and Mr. Clapper for this help in keeping the work alive until further funds are available.

## DOES IT PAY TO MAINTAIN YOUR OWN SHOP?

By Earl A. Polhamus

A lot has been written concerning shop equipment and methods of overhauling machinery. The big question is "Does it pay to have your own shop?" I believe that it does.

Work sent out has to be waited for if the shop happens to be busy. They have to pay shop help, rent, light and for equipment to overhaul a great many different kinds of machinery. All this creates a large overhead expense.

During the first few years, fairway mowers do not need to be torn down every year, every other year is enough. They should be ground every winter or when overhauling takes place and the bed knives replaced if necessary.

Greens mowers should be taken apart, cleaned and reassembled every winter but not ground unless necessary. Bed knives to be replaced as they wear out, even if it is in the middle of the season, as this is only a short job.

The life of a mower can be looked at in two ways depending on the care it receives. A mower receiving good care will give good results as long as there is wear in the reel. I should say about eight or nine years, on the other hand, a mower with poor care will not last over four or five years. A mower ceases to be an asset when two or more of the following things become noticeable; pawl sockets become sloppy through wear, ends of roller shaft cut through a large part of the carrier casting, grease can not be kept in the housing, reel becomes worn too quick, loose keyways and wheels worn smooth. Mowers ready for the junk pile have all these faults.

In equipping your own shop the things to be considered are: available space, light, power, handiness to water, a chimney so that heat can be provided and the necessary tools. A space twenty by thirty is large enough if it is handy to a storage space where the equipment can be stored as it is overhauled. The following should also be provided: Tanks where parts can be washed, a floor drain for washing with water, a grinder that will take machines up to thirty-six inch reels, a lapping machine to back off machines with emery, an electric or power drill, vise, gear pullers and an assortment of small tools is

about all the equipment necessary. Other equipment can be added as needed.

To overhaul and sharpen mowers it is not necessary to have an expert mechanic but a careful one. If care is taken and a machine is properly set up in the grinder, a mower will not be spoiled, but a little carelessness will ruin a mower in a hurry. Get a fair mechanic who is careful and who does not hurry on a tedious job and practice will do the rest. He will always learn something no matter how long he is at the game.

In overhauling mowers be sure that the bearings are tight so that there is no looseness in them no matter how slight and that they run free without binding. Never replace one ball in a race. Always replace all of them. Replacing one in a race of worn balls gives the reel an eccentric motion, the reel never hitting the bed knife with the same reel blade. Be sure that your mower is in line and not racked. This can be done by assembling on a perfectly flat surface. This does not include fairway mowers as they can not be put together out of line. Do your mowers right, if it does cost a little more and a trouble free season will follow with a minimum breakdown, barring accidents.

Greens mowers should be serviced when they start to tear the grass, if setting up the bed knife fails to remedy the fault. Refinishing with emery is all that is required unless the reel bevel is worn off, then they should be ground. A flat blade with no bevel pushes hard and does not do a good job. On greens mowers height of cut should be checked at least once a month. I find that grinding compound made with emery and soap cuts faster than emery and oil and washes off with water where with oil it is necessary to wash with gasoline before washing with water, thereby saving quite a lot of time.

Repainting is best done with compressed air. A fairway mower can be painted in about eleven minutes and do a good job where it takes at least an hour and a half to do an untidy job with a brush.

Do not forget to use plenty of oil and grease on any piece of equipment. Better use too much than too little. Care should be taken on greens mowers but what little may drip or run out on a fairway makes little difference. Oil and grease are cheaper than new machinery.

Tractor overhauling is not much of an item with the newer models. Carbon gives the largest amount of trouble. Grass juices cause a lot of rust and corrosion on the frame work. This should be scraped off and repainted every year.

Then there are all the odds and ends of equipment used on a golf course to be repaired, cleaned and painted such as distance markers, tee markers, greens poles, screens, fertilizer spreaders and sprayers. Hand equipment such as rakes to be repaired and a number of small tools sharpened.

I believe that a small welding outfit would be an asset. A mechanic does not have to be an expert welder to do simple welding, and there is a lot of that at times if a machine were available.

Machinery kept in good condition will do better work, more efficiently and economically and save time and money in the long run.

### OCTOBER MEETING

The October meeting was held at the Norfolk Golf Club on the 7th. There were demonstrations of mowing equipment in the morning.

Prizes in the member-chairman best ball tournament were awarded to:

1st net, N. Bruno, H. Crossley, 67.

2nd net, S. Braio, H. Doyle, 68 net.

In the tournament for members without partner, the following won prizes:

H. Mitchell, 92-70.

E. Hansen, 92-72.

A. J. Sperandio, 84-72.

E. Mauro, 97-72.

The next and last tournament of the season will be held on Oct. 28th, at the Meadowbrook G. C.

Paul Hayden, Chr.  
Golf Committee.

"America is the Land of Opportunity and maybe that accounts for so much knocking."

### RULES THAT WE SHOULD DISREGARD

The value and reputation of an organization depends almost entirely upon the calibre of its members. A member who is active, useful and really interested in the welfare of his organization does **NOT** observe the following rules.

1. Do not attend the meetings; when you pay your dues you fulfill your obligations to the Club.

2. Do not make a motion; if you have a constructive idea, don't express it, wait until after the meeting.

3. Do not discuss a motion from the floor; talk it over confidentially with the member next to you in a tone that is audible across the room.

4. Do not bother to vote; if a motion is carried and then does not prove beneficial, you can say you did not vote for it.

5. Do not serve on any committees; if you are not on the committee it is much easier to criticize it.

6. Do not contribute articles to your club paper; what do you think the editor is for?

7. Do not obtain the floor under any circumstances; let a few of the members do all of the business then you can say the club is operated by a clique.

8. Do not boost your profession or your club; it is much easier to broadcast their faults.

John L. Counsell.

Professor Lawrence S. Dickinson of the Mass. State College writes us the following advance notice of interest to all our readers:

"The annual Recreation Conference is to be held March 14, 15, and 16, (1941) and in connection with it, we will hold the usual exhibition."

We believe that the holding of the exhibition will add its usual value to the Conference, which is always helpful and interesting to those attending.

### OFFICERS' DIRECTORY

President	John Counsell, 5 Ellsworth Rd., Peabody, Mass.
Secretary	Philip Cassidy, Needham Golf Club, Needham, Mass.
Treasurer	Frank Wilson, Charles River C. C., Newton Centre, Mass.
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NEWSLETTER officers, see page two.

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