

UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION

NORTHEASTERN OFFICE

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NORTHEASTERN TURFLETTER

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VELVET BENTGRASS FOR PUTTING GREENS

The past season there has been a great increase in the number of golf course officials (mainly green committee members) who have inquired about velvet bentgrass and its suitability as a putting green cover in the states of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

Velvet bentgrass (*Agrostis canina*) is a perennial that spreads by stolons or creeping stems. The blades are very fine. Velvet bentgrass makes a very tight, closely-knit turf under a putting green height of cut. In New England and in parts of the northerly areas, present strains of velvet bentgrass grow more vigorously than in areas immediately to the south. As one progresses southward in the region of bentgrass adaptation, it becomes increasingly more difficult to manage and maintain the velvet bentgrasses.

The velvet bentgrasses in New Jersey and most of New York and Connecticut grow slowly and they grow so tightly that water, air and nutrient movements through them generally are retarded; they heal slowly when they are aerated or pocketed from ball marks or are injured in any way; they are more susceptible to many of our common putting green diseases; and they thatch or mat more readily than do other bentgrass species.

Velvet bentgrass was introduced into many putting greens in the Northeastern Region in the early days when South German mixed seed generally was used. Today circular patches of velvet bentgrasses are in evidence on many of these greens, although they have not generally grown nor spread much as compared with most of the creeping bentgrass types in the same mixture.

Seed, stolons or sod of several velvet bentgrass strains are being offered commercially in the Northeast (notably the Piper, Kernwood and Raritan strains); but for the reasons mentioned, velvet bentgrasses are less satisfactory for putting green purposes than are other strains of bentgrass throughout most of the region of bentgrass adaptation.

For the past several years Dr. Jesse De France, of the University of Rhode Island, has been working on improved velvet bentgrass selections, several of which are reported to be superior to the present velvets available. These improved velvet selections are being tested further and are not available as yet for golf course work.

Presently many improved putting green strains of creeping bentgrass are available in good quantity. Some of these include: C-1 (Arlington), C-19 (Congressional), C-7 (Cohansey), and Pennlu. Polycross seed is expected to be available in better supply during 1956. To get the most for your money - planned increase - well in advance of scheduled construction is recommended.

THE NINETEENTH GREEN

Was there a time last season when you wished that you had some finished putting green sod handy to replace a patch or two of diseased or dead area in your greens? It may have been only a foot or two square and in reality the afflicted area may have become no larger, but in the minds of many members it may have grown to boundless proportions as the season progressed. Why not insure against the recurrence of such headaches and possible complaints by growing a small nursery of putting green sod? No one is infallible; there is always the possibility of losing a bit of sod here or there through any combination of unforeseeable circumstances. If that occurs it is a simple matter to replace the unsightly sod with fresh nursery stock, thus giving an immediate psychological lift to the membership. Why not, therefore, set up a real green for that mythical 19th hole? If members complain about seeing double when they approach the 19th green, the healthy green color will bring out a confident smile -- one that betrays the fact that they know their superintendent is working every angle to insure the best conditions for their golfing pleasure.

VINCA ROSEA VAR. ALBA

Vinca rosea var. alba is a beautiful flowering plant that has good possibilities in the beautification program of clubhouse grounds of clubs in the Northeast. In the Northeastern Region this plant is recommended and treated as a summer annual. It is extremely easy to grow. It grows erect (unlike the common Vinca minor) to a height of approximately 20 inches. The shape of this plant is much like a tree -- many branches protrude from a central trunk. Its leaves are a deep rich green, and it flowers profusely. Once the plant develops, beautiful white flowers begin to bloom, and during most of the summer from twenty to thirty flowers appear on each plant. As each flower matures and disappears a new one develops to take its place, usually keeping twenty or more flowers in bloom for most of the summer.

Vinca rosea var. alba seed or potted plants are available commercially at seed or nursery establishments. However, if our subscribing clubs have difficulty in obtaining this plant and would like to try it along with these other annual flowerbed plants, send a self-addressed envelope to the Northeastern office and we will be happy to provide approximately a dozen seeds as a trial planting. If they work out to your liking, hundreds of seeds can be harvested from these plants as they mature -- for the next year's plantings.

How to Plant

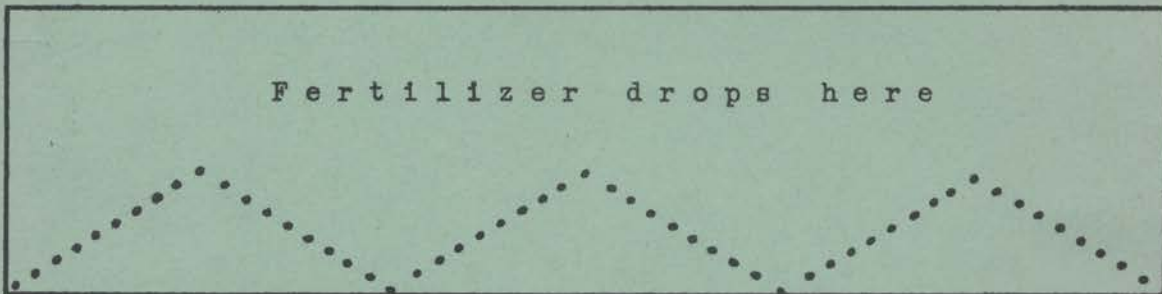
Arrange for greenhouse facilities and plant the seed in a rooting flat in February or early March. As the seedlings sprout, transplant them into thumb pots, to remain there until the danger of frost is over, then plant them outdoors.

In order to get the most out of this plant it is important to start early. For Northeasterners this means starting the plants in a greenhouse. While it is true that one may be successful in starting plants by seeding directly into a prepared soil outdoors (after the danger of frost is over) the season's growth will not be nearly so satisfactory nor will many flowers form.

TO HELP SPREAD FERTILIZER

A common problem with many of the fairway fertilizer spreaders is to get a good, uniform coverage of materials applied. Too often the fertilizer is laid down in rows rather than in a thin film over the turfgrasses.

Bill Mitchell, who is in charge of the Onondaga Golf and Country Club, Fayetteville, New York, modified the scatterboard on his spreader by hammering in nails in the form of several inverted V's all along the scatterboard to help spread the fertilizer as it drops. He says that it helps considerably in spreading material more uniformly. The scatterboard looks like this:



NEW TURFLETTER FEATURE

The Northeastern office invites readers to send in questions for a "Question and Answer" feature which will appear from time to time in the Northeastern Turfletter. All questions received will be treated with the strictest confidence and will be identified in print only by state of origin.

Questions will be selected on the basis of general interest to golf course workers and will appear as space allows. This is your Turfletter. We want to make it of maximum interest to you. Send in your Question(s) now!

DON'T FORGET THE CONFERENCES -- HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.

Northeastern Turfletter

USGA GREEN SECTION

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