UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION
GREEN SECTION

Southern Turfletter

No. 4 August - 1959

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ATHENS BENTGRASS VARIETY TEST -- A PROGRESS REPORT

Since last October a bentgrass variety test has been under way on the practice green of the Athens Country Club, Athens, Georgia. The test area was constructed "by the book," using a tile drainage system, crushed stone drainage bed, and a soil mixture (60% sand, 30% loamy topsoil, and 10% peat) according to laboratory physical analyses. Detailed management procedures have been followed to assure that any differences would be due to variety -- not maintenance.

Penncross, Cohansey, Seaside and Arlington-Congressional mixture were used in the main body of the test. Old Orchard, Nimisila and Washington bents were planted in observational plots.

To date, the following observations have been made:

1. The seeded bents were ready for play much earlier than vegetative plantings from stolons.

2. Cohansey was the slowest to develop into "puttable" turf.

3. Hot weather in June and July seemed to effect Seaside more adversely than any other variety. All other varieties are in excellent condition.

4. Brownpatch has been the only noticeable disease.

5. In all cases, the bentgrass plots have more eye appeal than adjoining areas of bermudagrass. We also realize that a 2,000 square foot plot is easier to watch over than 100,000 square feet of green surface.

It is hoped that, in time, this test and one at Pinehurst, North Carolina will indicate which variety will perform best under these conditions, and that more concrete recommendations on management can be made.

Seedheads on Tifgreen

Several people have asked about seedhead formation in Tifgreen bermudagrass. An experiment in 1955 at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, Tifton, Georgia, showed that this condition could be reduced, if not eliminated, by increasing the rate of nitrogen fertilization. In the Tifton plots, rates of 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per month kept the plants in a vegetative condition and no seedheads were formed.

Sod Webworms Continue to Cause Trouble

Sod webworms still present the most pressing insect problem. If greens develop a "mangy" appearance with numerous small, brown depressions in the surface and if birds are on the greens in the morning, webworms are probably present. Any insecticide seems to be effective in controlling webworms. Apply the insecticide in the afternoon so that it will be on the grass during the night when the worms feed. Several applications each season may be required.

Spiking Pays

Many superintendents dislike to undertake a thorough cultivation job during seasons of heavy play. They prefer to cultivate thoroughly two or three weeks prior to overseeding in the fall, and again during the transition period.

Because of the fact that greens tend to get a "crust" or compacted surface as a result of play and maintenance practices, they often need some sort of treatment before time for the next regular cultivation. Spiking has come to be used to alleviate compaction during this period.

Spiking cannot take the place of thorough cultivation. This practice results merely in a piercing or pricking of the surface. It alleviates "crustiness," however, and allows a more ready penetration of water. It does not rough up the surface of the putting green and there is no serious scar.

Spiking is a valuable companion practice to cultivation. The availability of motorized equipment makes this a rapid and relatively easy operation. Don't neglect to take advantage of the help this practice can give you.

Pond Weed Control

Simazin and a mixture of dalapon and 2,4-D have provided effective control of most kinds of pond weeds. The pelleted forms of these herbicides appear to be more effective and are easier to apply.

For greatest fish safety, it is better to treat only a part of the pond at one time. While the herbicides mentioned appear to be relatively safe materials, decaying vegetation sometimes results in a low oxygen content in the water, and this condition is harmful to fish.

The Transition Period in Review

From time to time reports are received of continued transition problems with hybrid bermudagrasses. This past winter has been no exception. The number of successful plantings, however, indicates that those who have had trouble should analyze their management programs. The problem may rest in management, rather than ryegrass, bentgrass or bermudagrass.

Ryegrass seeding rates from 20 to 83 pounds per 1,000 square feet were used in Georgia with no loss of Tifgreen bermudagrass. Bentgrass and bent-redtop combinations were used with no loss of Tiffine or Tifgreen. On the other hand, loss of Tifgreen and common bermuda has been reported by several sources.

In preparing for the coming winter season, NOW is the time to ask the following questions:

1. Is there likely to be excessive shading of greens during the winter when the sun is lower in the sky than in summer?
2. Is the fungicide program adequate to prevent the possibility of disease in the dormant bermudagrass?
3. Is the nitrogen fertilization program adequate to assure protein storage in the rhizomes of bermudagrass?
4. Is there equipment available to initiate early, gradual thinning of the overseeded grass?
5. Is it possible to prevent heavy play during periods when the soil is frozen or just beginning to thaw?
6. Is the soil so compacted that the bermudagrass has not been in good condition prior to overseeding?
7. Is the potash supply adequate? It appears to influence the amount of carbohydrates stored by the bermudagrass.

MEETING DATES

September 15-16-17 -- University of Florida Turfgrass Management Conference
Gainesville, Florida

November 16-20 ------ Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of American Society of Agronomy - Netherlands-Hilton Hotel
Cincinnati, Ohio

December 7-8-9 ----- 14th Annual Texas Turfgrass Conference
A. & M. College, College Station, Texas

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