



UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION

Southern Turfletter

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TRANSITION

Here is a word that connotes poor conditions in the mind of a golf course superintendent. To everyone else it is a perfectly respectable word. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary it means, "Passage from one state, stage of development, type, etc., to another; change; also the period, place, passage, etc., in which such a change is effected."

Thus, when one changes from a winter grass to a summer grass for his putting surface, he watches a transition take place. It is transition whether the change be gradual and almost imperceptible or whether it be abrupt and accompanied by poor conditions. It appears quite possible that the "know-how" will soon be available to make the annual spring transition a painless event and the word will no longer mean something ugly in the mind of the golf course superintendent.

A considerable amount of practical experience coupled with research has already revealed some methods of minimizing the poor conditions that often accompany the spring change-over. The trick, of course, is to have the bermudagrass growing well before the winter grass goes out. This implies several practices, which are enumerated below.

1. Bermudagrass should go into dormancy with ample food reserves. This is accomplished by judicious fertilization during the preceding season. Vigorous, but not lush, growth characterizes this condition.
2. Bermudagrass must be protected during its dormant period and at the time it is breaking dormancy against disease attacks. When winter grasses are masking the bermuda, diseases on the slow growing or dormant bermuda may go unnoticed.
3. Manage in the spring to encourage bermuda. Spike or verticut lightly to begin thinning the winter cover to remove competition from the bermuda. This treatment must be related to weather and the progress of the bermudagrass.

4. Try to keep the cool season grass from dying out, but begin to let it get a little dry to slow its growth.

5. Fertilize to encourage bermudagrass, but watch the cool season grass to prevent disease from wiping it out suddenly while it is in a lush condition. Treat with fungicides if necessary.

6. If bermudagrass is growing well and cool season grasses are persistent enough to pose a problem, judicious use of fertilizers or herbicides to burn lightly the foliage of the cool season grasses may be helpful.

Power Spiking

Harry Wright, superintendent at Peachtree Country Club in Atlanta, says the power spiker was one of his key pieces of equipment to help him make the transition in 1961 without difficulty.

The power driven spiking machine is an excellent machine for shallow cultivation. It will relieve some of the surface compaction, allowing the water and nutrients to enter into the soil readily. The disturbance of play is minimal and this is especially true if the greens are mowed right after each spiking.

It is advisable in most cases to use the power spiker rather than a heavy tractor on the putting green surfaces. Caution must be used when turning at the end of the run so foreign grass will not be transplanted into the green. Spiking once per week during the spring allows the bermuda to begin to grow in the shallow slits. Also, these small slits, created by the spiker, allow sunlight to penetrate deeper. This type of cultivation could be carried on between deeper cultivation practices.

GREEN SECTION MEETINGS

A series of three educational meetings will be held by the Green Section during the week of March 12. The meetings will be in Washington, D. C. on March 12; Chicago on March 14; and in San Francisco on March 16. All meetings will start at 2 p.m. and will last until 10 p.m., with a two hour break for dinner. All USGA clubs are invited to send two representatives to these meetings. Write to any of the Green Section offices if you wish additional details about the meeting nearest you.

CONFERENCES

February 26-27.....Southern Turfgrass Conference
Peabody Hotel, Memphis, Tenn.

April 9-10-11.....Southeastern Turfgrass Conference
University of Georgia
Coastal Plain Experiment Station
Tifton, Ga.

BENTGRASS IN THE SOUTH

For many years, bentgrass for greens in the South has been one of the fond hopes of those who play golf on both bentgrass and bermuda. The new bermudagrasses such as Tifgreen have provided the basis for much finer putting surfaces, but the problems of overseeding and transition still persist.

What is the outlook for bent in the South? The question must be answered with many qualifications. Bentgrass has been successful in Austin, Texas, in Nashville and in Atlanta. In all these places, it has presented some problems.

In summer, bentgrass roots become relatively short and inactive; they require frequent watering; if the watering is a little too heavy or if drainage is less than perfect, an oxygen shortage in the rooting zone may occur; wet wilt or scald may result. Watering thus becomes an extremely important consideration. A weakened plant must be watered sufficiently because wilt could be fatal, but it must not be watered too much because scald will kill it just as dead.

Fertilization in summer becomes a problem. Some fertility is necessary. The turf must grow fast enough to heal scars and the marks of wear. Too much fertility will cause the grass to be soft and susceptible to the attacks of disease producing organisms.

It appears that the shallow position of the active roots is a key to the problems besetting bentgrass in hot weather. The temperature of soils appears to be another extremely important factor. Perhaps the soil temperature affects the depth and activity of roots. Such matters need more research.

We do know that bentgrasses do quite well in areas such as Phoenix, where air temperatures often exceed 100° F. during the daytime hours, and the average July temperature is 90.3° F., but it is very difficult to grow bent in Jackson, Mississippi where maximum temperatures have rarely exceeded 100° F. and the July average temperature is 81° F. These are air temperatures, however, and it is quite likely that soil temperatures would show a rather different relationship. While it may seem far-fetched, there appears to be a possibility that a slight depression of temperature in critical times might be the difference in success and failure. Could such a depression be accomplished by using cooler water to shower greens more frequently?

At best, bentgrass in the South will not survive many human errors. Fertilizers must not be spilled or applied when the grass is wet, spray solutions or pesticides must be handled very carefully, traffic must be well distributed, mowers must be very carefully adjusted, verticutting and aeration must be carefully timed, and above all, irrigation practices must be near perfect during critical times. As bentgrass approaches the edges of its area of adaptability, these matters assume greater and greater importance.

The bentgrass grower in the South should be admonished to hope for continuously good weather conditions and don't make any mistakes. And most important, he must watch his greens closely every day during hot weather.

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