UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION
GREEN SECTION
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Southwestern Turfletter

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MISSISSIPPI VALLEY SUPERINTENDENTS WERE WONDERFUL HOSTS

Much has been said and written about the most recent GCSA Turfgrass Conference and Show held in St. Louis in January. This Conference and Show is one of the best that has ever been held. A great deal of credit for its outstanding success must go to the Mississippi Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association. The efforts that members of this association put forth in the way of planning insured a pleasant visit to St. Louis and a very successful conference.

The educational conferences were very well attended and much interest was shown in the talks. There were a great many excellent speakers. One of the highlights of the entire Conference and Show was the banquet address by Dr. George P. Donaldson, President of the Abraham Baldwin College at Tifton, Ga. "Mistuh Pete" entertained his audience in excellent fashion and he gave us some philosophy to live by in his talk of "Readin', Rockin' and Relaxin'". Many of those in attendance would like to adopt "Mistuh Pete's" formula.

CONTROL OF WINTER ANNUALS

Unless Bermudagrass is exceedingly dense, it is likely to be invaded during its dormant season by winter annuals. About this time of the year these annuals begin rapid growth and produce a rather unsightly turf. Many of them can be eliminated by mowing, but some of them will persist long enough to hinder the development of a dense Bermuda turf in the spring and when they finally die out they may leave thousands of seeds and a turf open enough for crabgrass invasion. Therefore, it is a good idea to try to get rid of these annuals just about the time Bermudagrass starts to grow. In most areas of the Southwest Bermudagrass will be growing very soon, if it has not already started.

One excellent way to eliminate winter annual weeds is by the use of a spray of ammonium nitrate solution. Ammonium nitrate is dissolved in water at the rate of one pound to one gallon of water, and then this solution is used at the rate of about 150 gallons per acre. Such a solution will burn all vegetation severely. If Bermudagrass has begun to grow, it will be burned too. However, the Bermuda rhizomes will not be damaged and if the turf is watered after about three days the ammonium nitrate will be washed down into the soil and Bermudagrass will resume growth. As a matter of fact, such treatment often causes Bermudagrass to put out new growth considerably faster.

This spraying serves a double purpose. It kills out the winter annuals and it supplies a considerable amount of fertilizer to the turf. One hundred fifty (150) gallons of this solution will contain 150 pounds of ammonium nitrate, which in turn, supplies approximately 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre. This is a fairly good spring fertilization and if this practice is followed, another application of fertilizer probably will not be necessary for about six or eight weeks.

A word of caution should be offered about the use of ammonium nitrate in spraying equipment. It should be washed out very thoroughly because it is corrosive to metals if it is left in contact with them for long periods of time. If you are doubtful about whether this practice will work for you, try it on a small area first. We believe you will like the results.

REMOVAL OF THATCH

Spring is an ideal time for the removal of thatch from your turf, particularly from your putting greens. During the winter months putting greens are not mowed frequently and very often grass is growing even though not much top growth is evident. Very frequently superintendents find that in the spring a considerable amount of thatch or mat has accumulated during the winter when they thought that grass was pretty nearly dormant. This thatch should be removed before warm weather comes because it is rather difficult to remove it after the grass has started growing actively. The amount of golf will increase as spring approaches thereby adding to the difficulty of getting such a job done.

We are very fortunate today to have excellent machines available for thatch removal. It is suggested that if you are bothered by thatch or grain that you do a rather thorough job of removal in the spring, then the task of preventing thatch formation during the growing season will be much easier to handle. Thatch removal, cultivation, and topdressing at this time can put your putting greens into the growing season in excellent condition.

WATER SYSTEM REPAIRS SHOULD BE MADE NOW

A great many golf course superintendents will discover when they turn the water on again this spring that leaks have developed somewhere in their lines. While most superintendents are extremely busy with spring duties, it is a good idea to turn your water on soon and find out whether or not you have leaks and then get the repairs made promptly. When the season comes that you actually need to use the water, it is a poor time to have the system cut off while repairs are being made. Furthermore, later repairs will cause fairways to be disturbed during the season when any scars are apt to be invaded rapidly by crabgrass. If those scars are made now and a good job of patching is done, your turf will have time to recover before the hot weather and crabgrass season arrives. Therefore, it is important to make these repairs, not only from the standpoint of the water system, but from the standpoint of the turf you will have to destroy to get at the lines. Foresight in this respect can save you a great deal of trouble later on.

SOIL ANALYSIS

Very often a soil analysis may be worth many times its cost to you. If you have not had your soil analyzed for some time it might be a good idea to have analyses made of representative greens and fairways. Many soils in the Southwest naturally have a good supply of phosphorus and potash and, therefore, need only nitrogen. It is wasteful to apply fertilizer elements that are not needed. However, there are some areas in which soils are deficient in these elements and even where soils are not naturally deficient, the use of large amounts of nitrogen fertilizer sometimes causes a rapid growth of grass, and particularly where clippings are removed one will find phosphorus and potash becoming depleted. Such depletion is caused by the removal of these elements through the clippings.

Most state experiment stations maintain a soil testing service where one can send his samples and have them analyzed. Many times the stations' interpretations of soil analyses, however, may be based upon their recommendations for field crops rather than turf. Therefore, if the Southwestern Regional Office can be of help to you in the interpretation of your results of analyses, we shall be happy to hear from you. If you do not have a place where you can send your soil samples to be analyzed, they may be forwarded to the Southwestern Office, USGA Green Section, Texas A. & M. College, College Station, Texas. They will be handled by the State Soil Laboratory here and analyses will be interpreted and recommendations will be made by this office. The charge for soil analyses is $1.00 per sample. Inasmuch as the soil laboratory will not undertake to analyze your samples until you have submitted your check, you are requested to send payment along with the soil samples when they are submitted.

Many of the popular fertilizers on the market contain more phosphorus than nitrogen or potash. For field crop or garden use relatively large amounts of phosphorus are needed for good yields and good quality. But turf needs a relatively small amount of phosphorus. Perhaps this is the element most overused in the fertilization of turf. It has been said that some turf areas have literally become low-grade phosphate mines because of the very large amounts of unneeded phosphorus that has been put on them in the form of commercial fertilizer.

Have your soil tested. You may be surprised by what you find. Certainly you will be able to apply fertilizer with a surer knowledge of your turf's needs.

May We Help?

Last year we had a few calls from superintendents who ran into trouble and in some cases we were able to help them. We talked to others who had troubles but who did not call because they didn't want to bother us. Your Regional Turf Service was designed to serve you. It can serve you more effectively if you call and tell us about your trouble when it strikes. Your Regional Director may not always be able to come to your course immediately but he may be able to offer help by phone or mail.

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