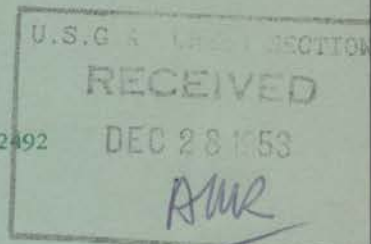


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## Western Turfletter

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### A SUCCESS STORY

As 1953 draws to a close, many club inventories will make an accounting which shows that "the bar made money, the restaurant broke even, and all other activities were a drain on the exchequer". This causes us some concern, because course conditioning is not regarded in its proper position of being a cash crop or money making item. A few privately operated public fee courses know from the thinness or thickness of their wallets that the turf indeed has direct bearing on financial success or failure. They also know, as should every golf course, that the condition of the turfgrasses rests in the hands of the golf course superintendent. In far too many instances the superintendent carries the highest handicap in the club, when he should be playing from scratch as regards a sufficient budget to get and keep the turf in championship condition. It should go without saying that where the turf is poor membership suffers or green fees fall off.

### The Clubhouse That Turf Built

All of us remember the story "The House That Jack Built", and we can point with pride to at least one instance of its up to date counterpart, "The Clubhouse That Turf Built". One such club is the Fairfax Country Club, Fairfax, Virginia.

Any good success story has a hero, a heroine, and a villain. This story had two heroes, John Connolley, Owner, and the former Bill Glover, Golf Course Superintendent. The heroine was the turfgrass, and the villain was ever present in the form of diseases, insects, weather variables, and no doubt budget difficulties in the early days of establishment. The fact that the forces of good over evil won out in the long run is evidenced today by a monument in the form of a modern, expensive, well designed clubhouse that offers every conceivable facility to the public fee golfer.

The moral of the story is that the clubhouse came last and the excellent condition of the turfgrass came first. The greens were not only properly designed, but also every effort and care went into their construction to make certain that the grass would have every chance to

succeed under the capable management of our heroes. The soil mixture was uniform throughout the entire profile. Surface, subsurface, and internal drainage left little to be desired. The very latest and best of improved bentgrass selections developed by the Green Section were used for planting. Further, the budget was sufficient to provide funds for adequate fertilizing, insect and disease controls, labor and machinery necessary to do the proper maintenance job.

In the early days a rather nondescript farmhouse was used as a clubhouse. As I recall there were minimum restroom facilities, few lockers and inadequate showering arrangements. The golfer could buy only a cold sandwich and a bottle of pop for lunch, and a few basic requirements such as golf balls, tees and the like needed to play the game. Thus, the golfer really had to "rough it" in order to enjoy championship turf, and the fact became more and more obvious that enjoyment of this turf indeed made it a cash crop.

The greatest handicap to our villain was the enthusiasm of private and public fee golfers alike to drive several miles out of their way, and pay a somewhat stiffer green fee for the pleasure of playing on good turf. This in turn allowed for further improvements on fairways and tees, and eventually the construction of an ultra modern clubhouse.

#### Message To Club Officials

To complete our success story this message was implied. All of our golf courses in the West have heroes in the form of highly qualified golf course superintendents. These men will give their clubs good turf, and keep the villainous ravages of turf pests to a minimum, if they are provided with the tools to do the job. Where the proper tools are available, the individual club will benefit from increased player satisfaction, pride of membership, and a knowledge of value received.

In return for this, the golfer should give more recognition to his superintendent who has or can provide him with high quality turf. We believe that such recognition should come frequently throughout the year, and can't think of a better time to start it than now during the Holiday season.

#### THE AGE OF MIRACLES

Recently we received a request from a member club desirous of obtaining the best adapted variety of grass for their fairways. The inquiry went on to state that several of the golfing members had raised slightly over \$300 for this purpose, and that their budget necessitated the use of a grass that required little water, no fertilizer, and infrequent care from the labor standpoint. Truly, this club was after a panacea or "miracle grass" that is now and possibly always will be unobtainable.

There is good reason for such requests. In recent years news articles for popular consumption and commercial advertisements have sometimes indicated that the unobtainable is already here. If we would believe all

that we read, turfgrass maintenance today would be absolute simplicity if we used "X grass that never needs to be mowed", or "X chemical that eliminates the need for mowing on our present turf". These are only a few of the more fantastic claims made in recent years by over zealous writers, and are unfortunate in that they malign the use of improved grasses and chemicals that are finding their proper place on our western golf courses.

The age of miracles leads us to believe that this space might well be used from time to time to separate fact from fantasy in the light of our present knowledge. Admittedly, this knowledge may change when further research evidence is forthcoming.

#### The Grass That Doesn't Require Mowing

We have heard of two ground covers that are reputed to fit into the category of eliminating mowers. Neither of them are grasses, and neither of them are desirable on golf courses. In fact both are rightly considered to be noxious weeds. The only reason for discussing them is that outside their zone of natural adaptation, member clubs wonder if they are worthwhile considering.

"Midgetgrass" (Sagina apetala) is nothing more than a fancier sounding name for "pearlwort", which is the bane of a superintendents existence throughout the Northwest. Quite an expenditure is now being made at the Western Washington Experiment Station in an effort to find suitable chemical controls for this pest. At the present time sodium arsenite at light frequent rates shows the most promise.

"Dichondra" (Dichondra repens) is used to some extent for lawns throughout California. Formerly it was an expensive headache on greens in Southern California. Today, thanks to research and 2,4-D it can be kept under control, although periodically it raises its ugly head to interfere with the golfer's enjoyment of his game.

#### The Chemical That Eliminates The Need For Mowing

One of the more recent chemicals to catch the eye and imagination of popular writers is Maleic Hydrazide. This growth inhibitor may offer a possible solution as a chemical trimmer for turf covers on ditch banks, deep roughs and other marginal areas where density and body is secondary to maintenance mowing costs. However, even for this worthwhile purpose, the chemical is touchy to handle, and if used at the wrong application rate, or the right rate at the wrong time it has inhibited growth by killing the plant.

The thought of inhibiting growth of a desirable grass on greens, tees and fairways scares us. Our main objective in life has been to encourage strong vigorous growth. We know that when something happens to slow down growth, whether it be disease, low fertility or drought, the turf is wide open for weed invasion. Further, we would wonder how divots could ever heal over if we purposely stopped the grass from growing.

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This Is Your

# Western Turfletter

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