

# UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION WESTERN OFFICE



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## • Western Turfletter •

### A F T E R M A T H - - - OF A WESTERN WINTER

Winter had had its last icy fling across the West. From Seattle to Denver, Salt Lake to San Diego, professional grassmen totalled up the damage and, with the help of their co-partner - Spring Growing Weather - rapidly prepared for this year's golfing season. Hardest hit of all was the Pacific Northwest.

"This has been the worst winter for grass I have seen in thirty years on golf courses", reports Ken Putnam, Seattle Golf Club Superintendent. "A sudden temperature drop in early November knocked out Poa annua and most of the Colonial bents. Congressional came through the best. - - - Spring is 6 weeks late and even the daisies have been slow to start this year. Labor costs are up".

Jack King, Columbia-Edgewater Club in Portland, confirms the news from Seattle. "This was an extra long, cold winter for the Portland area. We had an early freeze that killed some turf and lots of shrubs and trees. Rain and snowfall is above normal".

#### WHAT IS THE NEWS FROM OTHER WESTERN SECTIONS? -

Utah and Inter-Mountain Area: - Karsten Hansen, The Country Club, Salt Lake City, reports: "Rainfall is below normal and the summer shapes up as a dry and hot one. We have had a very early spring with 'green up' around mid-March. In the mountains, 20 miles east of Salt Lake City, however, over 145 inches of snow is reported. Some Poa annua suffered winter kill and snowmold caused slight additional turf loss. The labor market is tight as building and construction work is booming. We are trying to compete at 50¢ lower per hour".

Denver-Rocky Mountain Area: - Jim Haines, Denver Country Club, reports: "Rainfall was 3.48 inches; above normal by 1.46 inches. Snow in the Denver water shed is somewhat above the 5 year average and our irrigation problems may be slightly improved this summer. High and dry winds caused a little winter kill, especially on Poa annua. Permanent grasses started growth in late March. No change in the labor picture".

Southern California: - Jack Baker, Valley Club of Montecito, Santa Barbara, California, reports: "Rainfall is up; 17.98 inches (November thru April) compared with the normal of 14 inches. Fairway bermuda went off color in late November but by mid-April it was back to vigorous growth, after an early feeding. The labor situation is normal; however, labor costs tend to be higher".

Grass is a durable plant - and Spring is a true Reconstructionist.

D I S E A S E -

"A POUND OF CURE?"

Disease, insects and weather have often been called our worst natural enemies. From all indications, loss of putting turf to disease is on the increase in the West. Progressive Western Superintendents are now laying in their fungicide supplies and will be ready to do battle with any foe. The big question that remains is:

"Should I follow a preventative spray schedule: or, hope to catch and control any disease outbreak in its early stages?" YOU must furnish the final answer to this substantial question.

In 1934, University of Minnesota scientists crossed two fungi spores that carried five clearly contrasting characters. By 1952 investigators at the University had produced about ten thousand different types from recombinations and mutations among the descendants of the two original spores! Our problem then is that of dealing with, (1) the different specific turf diseases, and (2) a great variability with each disease.

Helminthosporium is an outstanding example of this condition. Helminthosporium is the scientists name for "Melting Out" and worthy of a place in our vocabulary. It is probably our most serious turf disease in the West today. It causes leaf spots, root rots and seedling blights that are very complex and difficult to identify. Symptoms do not fall into a well defined pattern as in brownpatch and dollarspot. Good management reduces the risk of a "Helminth" attack; i.e. healthy, properly fed turf (not starved nor over succulent), a minimum of thatch, proper watering to encourage deep roots (avoid continually saturated soils as well as too dry soils). Should an attack occur in spite of good management, the best control answers seem to be in the phenyl mercury materials (PMAS) or the antibiotic fungicides (Acti-dione).

Curvularia has produced serious turf damage but is now suspected of being a "light weight" in its class; i.e. it gains entrance into the plant only after some other injury or weakening has occurred. Fertilizer burn, scalping, chlorosis, low fertility, or wilting may lay the plant open to an attack of Curvularia. Control is obtained by Cadmium (Cadminate), phenyl mercury, or antibiotic fungicides.

Dollar Spot occurrence has a close relationship to fertility levels. Avoid starvation! Avoid over succulence! Cadmium compounds give good control.

Brown Patch and Pythium are two diseases that have struck Western turfgrass within the past year. Pythium control (with Malachite Green) was mentioned in the last issue of "Western Turfletter". Brown Patch control is successfully handled by Tersan. In severe cases, its effectiveness is increased if a mercury compound is added.

Copper Spot is a word I hear often but have not as yet seen in the West. True Copper Spot forms circular patches 1 to 3 inches in diameter. High temperatures and high humidity are necessary before the copper colored fungus spores covering the leaves are produced. Brush a handkerchief over the diseased area and if the handkerchief becomes copper colored, you have your proof of Copper Spot. Cadmium gives the most complete control.

"O R A N O U N C E O F P R E V E N T I O N ?"

Those with great hind sight may not appreciate the Superintendents efforts to reduce costs by following a disease 'control' program rather than a 'preventative' one. Often disease will strike over the weekend and by Monday morning a real problem has developed. The horse has been stolen!!! -- We believe a preventative disease control program should be considered if, in the past two years serious turf loss due to disease, resulted in your area. Certainly such a program should be suggested (preferably in writing) to your Green Chairman before the summer season.

Last year such capable Superintendents as Don Caulkins, Fox Hills Men's Golf Club, Los Angeles; Tom Haines, Plumas Lake, Marysville; Chuck Friday, Hillcrest Country Club, Los Angeles; Harold Stelling, Santa Ana Country Club, Santa Ana, and others followed such a program.

As you consider the pros and cons and chart your course for the year, don't lose sight of these other important navigational aids for a successful journey:

1. Iron sulfate is important to help maintain good vigor and stronger plants.
2. Water greens thoroughly and preferably in the very early morning, to minimize disease.
3. Syringe only when the grass requires it.
4. Keep an accurate record of all fungicide and fertilizer applications.
5. Feed lightly but frequently during the hot months.
6. If an accurate identification of a particular disease is difficult, or impossible, try a 'shotgun' mixture of Tersan, phenyl mercury and cadmium.
7. Good Management is THE important factor in disease free turf. Fungicides are only a 'crutch' if disease persists.

"BEEN ASKED ABOUT 'MONDO GRASS' LATELY?"

You might be. It seems our Eastern brethren have recently been subjected to a wide spread advertising campaign -- beamed at home owners -- extolling the virtues of "Blue Green Mondo Grass". Dr. F. C. Juska, USDA Research Agronomist, passes this word on to us, via Dr. Marvin H. Ferguson, USGA Research Coordinator:

"Mondo or Ophiopogon japonicus is not a grass but a low growing evergreen perennial closely related to the lily-of-the-valley. As a ground cover, 6 to 12 inches high, it is not objectionable.

The Ophiopogon species are not recommended for general lawn purposes. The plant recovers slowly when mowed. Removal of the top portion of the leaf exposes an open, unsightly sod that may thin out further if mowing is continued. Mondo has been largely used for borders and edgings in Italy and Southern France, and is being used for the same purpose in some Southern states."

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"WHEN DEALING WITH YOURSELF - USE YOUR HEAD

WHEN DEALING WITH OTHERS - USE YOUR HEART"

John Charles Thomas

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