

## THE CARE OF GOLF COURSES

*Continued*

By THE EDITOR

**SODDING** Frequently the question **vs.** arises as to whether it is **SEEDING** better to turf or seed a putting green. In my opinion, seeding is far preferable. True, it takes longer for the green to be brought into playing condition, but that is the only objection, and it quickly disappears when the many advantages of seeding are taken into consideration. Turf, no matter how good, is never the same when transplanted from its natural habitat, even on the same course. Somehow, and invariably, the coarser constituent grasses assert themselves in the new location to the almost total exclusion and final disappearance of those of finer quality. And the expense attached to sodding is infinitely greater than that of seeding.

If, however, it is deemed advisable to turf a green, or to strip one or more for the purpose of remodelling the surface, a few hints born of practical experience may not be amiss. In this connection, it may be added that turf taken from and re-laid on the same green does not deteriorate in any way. In point of fact it is improved if, before re-laying, the ground is treated with an application of sulphate of ammonia, as already suggested.

**WHEN TO SOD** The best time to start the work is very early in the spring, just as soon as the frost is out of the ground. The roots are then in a quiescent state and the turves may be stacked and kept for a week or more without injury. A turf-cutter should be used. This is an implement with runners, midway

between which is a knife, which cuts the turf uniformly about two or three inches deep and in a continuous strip about a foot wide. It is usually weighted down by a man standing on it, another man directing the pair of horses attached.

**START RIGHT** It is necessary to get the four side lines started as straight as possible. Stake these out and whitewash them. After the first strip is cut, the machine, in the hands of a good driver, may be said to automatically adjust itself to the remaining strips. The importance of having the lines straight will be appreciated when the work of relaying is undertaken, so as to avoid interstices between the joints. If the turves are cut by hand—a very tedious and expensive job—it is impossible to get them uniform in depth. To secure uniformity it is necessary to have a three-sided box made, the same width as the turves, the sides about 2 inches high, into which each one is placed root-end up and the excess cut off with a scythe blade.

As the machine cuts a strip a man follows with an edging knife or hoe and cuts it into sections about 15 inches apart. Other men place these, flat, not rolled, in stacks alongside.

After the green is stripped it should be plowed, harrowed and rolled exactly as already recommended for a new green and a dressing of sulphate of ammonia, Canada wood ashes or bone dust applied. This plant food being placed right where it is wanted, i. e., at the base of the roots, lasts a very long time and is of inestimable value. If the green is undulating

apply the dressing pretty liberally on the high places or mounds. I have found it an excellent thing, in order to conserve the moisture, to make a pocket, as it were, or basin, made of a thin layer of clay some foot to eighteen inches below the surface on high or exposed places, where the water runs off quickly.

**RE-LAYING TURVES** Before re-laying the turves lightly scratch the surface with a rake. When two or three are down take a hardwood board an inch thick and about 18 inches wide and hammer them up snugly from the exposed side and end. This will minimize breaks or interstices between the joints. When the re-laying is completed fill in all cracks with fine loam plentifully mixed with seed, then roll and re-roll and cross roll.

If the work is done in the early spring the soil will be fairly soft and plastic and the turves will knit or bind well together and make a compact mass with plenty of rolling.

If operations are conducted in the fall and the ground is inclined to be dry, it is advisable to thoroughly soak the re-laid green before rolling, taking care not to wash out the dressing.

**COURSE UPKEEP** Much, if not all of what I have already said bears more directly on a course in the making.

Now let us turn our attention to the finished article.

As the putting greens are by far the most important feature, representing, as they do, the very heart and soul of a links, they should undoubtedly have the utmost care bestowed upon them. Fortunate indeed is the club that has a green-keeper who both understands and *loves* his work. The dearth of professional

talent, however, has resulted in the courses of most clubs being looked after by a Green Committee, at the head of which may usually be found a man who has a natural aptitude for the work, combined with sufficient leisure to see that his instructions are properly carried out. The next best thing to the ideal green-keeper is such a Committee of One.

Now, after this digression, let us get on to the green and see what is necessary to keep it in tip-top shape. There is a whole lot; more, I fear, than the limited space of this article will permit me to recite. However, let us carefully consider the essentials, and as many of those little things, small in themselves, but of infinite importance when bulked together—and frequently neglected—which mark the difference between a good green and a poor one.

**CARE OF GREENS** The first thing to do on a green is to rid it of worms. It is unnecessary for me to dwell on this particular subject at length as there are some excellent worm killers on the market.

But, try as one may, some of these pests will escape attack. Then it becomes necessary before cutting or rolling, to scatter whatever worm-casts may be in evidence. This is done by a long bamboo pole, or a broom made of a collection of very thin pieces of round cane about three feet long. On no account should this preliminary treatment be neglected. If it is, it means the ruination of the green, as the mower or roller passing over the damp casts usually plasters them down on the grass—and small bare spots are the inevitable result.

**WEEDS** The next thing is to get rid of weeds, which, despite the utmost care, will make their appearance

every season—not re-appearance, but *new* plants, the result of seed introduced by birds, or, more frequently the wind. On a wind-swept course, like Garden City, weeds are a source of constant trouble—chiefly dandelion and plantain. These, if allowed to remain, spread and kill the grass, I have found a most efficacious method of absolutely killing them, without in any way injuring the turf—simple and rapid. Get a wide-necked bottle; half fill it with vitriol (sulphuric acid). Get also a small rod of steel, tapered, something like the tine of a hay fork, only thinner, about nine or ten inches long. Run this into a handle. Dip the rod into the liquid and scrape alongside the bottle on withdrawal so that only a drop or so of the acid remains on the rod. Pierce the offending weed in the center for an inch or so in depth—and that weed is gone forever. Do not have the rod too thick, otherwise some of the acid is liable to spread and if it comes in contact with grass it will burn it up. But with ordinary care the surrounding grass is not affected at all, that is, injuriously. On the contrary, the space occupied by the intruder is very quickly covered up completely and no evidence remains of its former existence. Caution the user not to allow any drops to spill, either on himself or the turf, as it will eat through most anything.

It is no exaggeration to say that last season *thousands* of weeds of various kinds were killed by this process at Garden City, to the great improvement of the greens. I know because I happened to spend nearly all my time there superintending things.

**HAVE A NURSERY** It is an excellent plan to have a spare piece of ground devoted to a nursery—a sort of spare green in some out-of-the-

way corner. This should receive the same care as a regular green. With a hole-cutter, turf may easily be transferred to any green that needs patching in places—as even the best do occasionally. Or larger turves may be similarly handled. Always fill up the holes left in the nursery with fine loam plentifully mixed with seed.

**CUTTING AND ROLLING** All greens should be cut and rolled every day during the growing season. And the closer they are cut the better. It is impossible to get a really fine green otherwise. If the cutting is done north and south to-day, tomorrow it should be east and west, and so on alternately. And the same with the rolling. It is advisable for the men to wear heelless shoes, so that no impression may be left when the ground is moist. And for the same reason a man should never be permitted to push a roller—he should always pull it. The use of a heavy roller is not desirable. Far better a light wooden one, used daily.

I do not believe in the use of grass-catchers on mowers. The cut grass not only provides a certain amount of nutriment, but it is more especially valuable in furnishing humus, lacking which, no green can be made good. During mid-summer, unless water is artificially applied at night, the grass should be allowed to grow a trifle higher. But, if watered, it cannot be kept too closely clipped. Nothing helps so much toward securing fine, dense turf as cutting and rolling. Let me repeat, even at the risk of being wearisome—never allow a green to be either cut or rolled if it shows any evidence of needing brushing.

**CHANGING HOLES** New holes should be cut on every green *at least* once a week during the playing sea-

son. They should never be allowed to go until signs of wear are visible.

In dry weather, before replacing the turf in the old hole, soak the former for a little while in water, and also fill the new hole with water to prevent the edges crumbling.

Unless the circular piece of turf is soaked it frequently dies.

During a tournament, the mower should be run both north and south and east and west within a radius of five or six feet of the hole.

**SANDING GREENS** The use of fine, sharp, white sand (sea-sand) helps considerably in making the grass finer. Or inland sand, if fine, answers almost as well. Apply during the winter—never in warm weather. The trouble with the vast majority of greens in this country is that the grass is too coarse. This is due principally to the wrong kinds of seed having been used originally, joined to the soil in most cases being too rich, making even fine grasses a little coarse and coarse grasses much coarser. The only remedy is to impoverish the soil by the yearly and liberal use of sand, helped along also by constant cutting and rolling.

It is well also to remember that, as a general thing, our greens, once established, do not need anything in the way of fertilizers. Nor will they for some time to come. There are, of course, isolated exceptions, due to natural thinness or poverty of soil, but these should be treated on their merits.

**THE FAIRWAY** One of the principal requisites of a good course is that the fair green should be of firm texture. Plenty of play will help to bring this about, as will frequent rolling. The combined auto-mower and roller has helped many courses, doing *each season* what it has taken the human foot scores and scores of years to do at St. Andrews. Not only has it made the "going" better, providing a firmer basis and better lies, but it has also very materially improved the quality of the turf. There need be no apprehension of the roller being too heavy. Nature looks after that every winter.

All courses get cut more or less, according to the volume of play—or, sometimes, to the *kind* of play. Provision should be made for the necessary repairs. The simplest plan is to have a load of loam convenient to the fairway of each hole, and to have a man go carefully over the ground with a bucketful of loam, with which seed has previously been mixed, and fill in all divot marks and press down with the foot. This may be done any time from April to October.

**TEES** The suggestion just offered applies also to tees, especially those from which iron shots are played. As previously mentioned, tees should be of generous size; and the tee-plates or discs should be systematically changed at frequent intervals, before there are any signs of undue wear. The grass should be kept cut very closely. A hairy tee is an abomination—worse even than a "dirt" one.

