

Southern California Turf Culture

A Quarterly Publication devoted to the activities of the Experimental Program in Turf Culture of the College of Agriculture, University of California, Los Angeles 24, California.

APRIL, 1953

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

EVENING MEETINGS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The following schedule of evening meetings has been announced by the Advisory Committee. All meetings are open to the public and those who wish to attend should make reservations at least several days in advance by notifying Mr. F. W. Roewekamp, Room 305 City Hall; Los Angeles 12. Mr. Roewekamp's secretary may also be called for reservations. The phone number is Michigan 5211, - Extension 2254.

APRIL 6, RANCHO GOLF CLUBHOUSE - 6:00 P.M.
Colin C. Simpson, Southern California Golf Association in charge of the meeting. Charles Wilson will be the main speaker. Chairmen of the Greens Committee with their Superintendents will attend. There will be a question and answer session.

MAY 11, RANCHO GOLF CLUBHOUSE - 6:00 P.M.
Jack Evans, California Association of Nurserymen, Chairman. Richard Westcott of Paul J. Howard's will be Master of Ceremonies. Turf meeting will be held in conjunction with the meeting of the California Association of Nurserymen. There will be a general discussion on turf for smaller areas and some of the problems of the home owner which are brought to the attention of the nurserymen.

JUNE 8, RANCHO GOLF CLUBHOUSE - 6:00 P.M.
Leo Davis, California Fertilizer Association in charge of the meeting. There will be a speaker and some of the members of the Association will conduct a panel.

MERION BLUEGRASS IN CALIFORNIA

V.T. Stoutemyer

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Merion bluegrass is making a fine record in many parts of California. Observations made by the writer over a period of several years have verified all of the claims which have been made for this grass by its introducers, the U. S. Golf Association Green Section, although we could hardly agree with some of the statements which have been made by over-enthusiastic garden writers and radio lecturers.

We believe that it is a remarkable advance in turf grasses which sets a high standard for plant breeders to

BERMUDAGRASS -- A WARNING

One of the unfortunate results of modern travel facilities is the increased rate of dissemination of new plant pests and diseases.

We believe that it is to the best interests of all those concerned with turf culture in California to call attention to a particularly serious insect pest of bermudagrass and some other species also, which has been spreading from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas for some time and is now found in Florida. This insect, Rhodes grass Scale, is particularly serious under arid conditions, and insecticides, even parathion, do not seem to give very effective control.

Because of this pest, we have imported none of the bermudagrasses produced by breeders in Texas, and we do not intend to import vegetative material from any infested areas. Seed is the safest method of introducing new types of grasses and after a few generations of selection and breeding, probably something particularly well adapted to California conditions can be produced.

Because of the possible seriousness of such a pest in California, we urge that those vacationing in the Gulf Coast States refrain from bringing in living vegetative grass materials. All such material imported from other presumably safe areas should be inspected by the proper agricultural authorities, who have done a remarkable job of excluding some very serious plant pests from California. Their work can be completely effective only with the willing cooperation of all individuals concerned with turf culture.

surpass. On the other hand, it is not a grass to put in the hands of someone who will neglect maintenance. Some outstanding turf of Merion bluegrass has been produced on the turf plots at UCLA, and likewise some rather mediocre sod as well, depending on the management practices applied.

Some of the questions which are often asked cannot be answered with assurance at the present time. However, the following recommendations are offered tentatively and seem to be in line with experiences in other parts of the country.

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**RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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U. S. Golf Association Green Section

TURF CULTURE IN ENGLAND

The development of the field of turf culture in America has been notable since the pioneer work of Piper and Oakley, Lyman Carrier, and John Monteith, Jr.

It is well occasionally to observe the similar work which is being done in England. The National Association of Groundsmen was formed in 1934, and this organization has worked closely with the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley in Yorkshire. Recently this group sponsored an exhibition of sports grounds equipment and supplies at the Hurlingham Club in London on October 1 and 2, 1952. This exhibition was attended by over 10,000 people.

One organization in America which operates in this field is the Athletic and Recreational Turf Association, now active in Southern California. We sincerely hope that it may grow in numbers and influence and eventually achieve a similar position of importance.

RECENT GIFTS

**Phil Lau
Culver City, California
1 Soil Testing Tube**

**George Royes Grass Seeds
Imbler, Oregon
3 lbs. FX-1 Fescue Seed**

**Northrup, King & Co.
Los Angeles
14 lbs. Grass Seed**

**Various Donors, through
Southern California Golf
Association
\$3,000.00**

An eight-page article on lawns and lawnmaking, with four pages in color, appeared in "Life" magazine for September 8. Pictures of common turf grasses, weeds and other pests were shown, together with maintenance tools and details of lawnmaking. This article was originally inspired by a visit of one of the staff editors of "Life" to our experimental turf plots, over a year ago. We like to think that this typifies the expanding influence of our experimental program in turf culture.

This publication "Southern California Turf Culture" is sponsored and financed by the Research Advisory Committee. Communications should be sent to the Secretary, or to Dr. V. T. Stoutemyer, Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture University of California, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles 24, California.

Seed of Merion bluegrass has, with us, been slower to germinate than ordinary Kentucky bluegrass. With careful seeding, 1 lb. per 1000 sq. ft. or even less, has given a dense stand, provided a good weed-free seed bed has been established. This remains the ordinary recommendation of the Green Section, although recently a suggestion has been made of using 2 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. under less favorable circumstances. Whether or not these very low seeding rates are to be recommended generally to non-professionals is still uncertain.

The seeding of Merion bluegrass unmixed has been recommended, since it is rather slow starting and may be smothered by aggressive grasses. However, because of the high price and scarcity of Merion bluegrass seed, there has been much interest in mixtures. A seeding of Merion bluegrass with an equal quantity of redtop in one of our turf plots has shown that Merion bluegrass does not displace undesirable turf grasses very rapidly. Also some *Poa trivialis* introduced in this seeding as an impurity has persisted in about the same proportion. The slow germination and early growth of Merion bluegrass both explain some of the reported failures with mixtures and also with attempts to seed it in existing turf.

Management is all-important in the results obtainable from Merion bluegrass. Generous, but not excessive, fertilization is mandatory. Excessive watering weakens this grass, and for this reason the watering required for Colonial bent. In a grass mixture would be likely to eliminate Merion bluegrass. Some of the best and most weed-free turf which we have produced has been under the restricted watering suitable for Meyer zoysia.

One of the most valuable properties of Merion bluegrass is its ability to stand low clipping. It can be mowed at 3/4" height or less without injurious effects, and higher cutting will probably result in lower quality turf.

Merion bluegrass has the odd characteristic of extreme sensitivity to phenyl mercuric weed killers, which should never be used with this variety, although they are usable with practically all other lawn grasses.

Merion bluegrass is resistant, but not entirely immune, to a number of diseases, including the leaf spot, which often attacks ordinary Kentucky bluegrass in the spring.

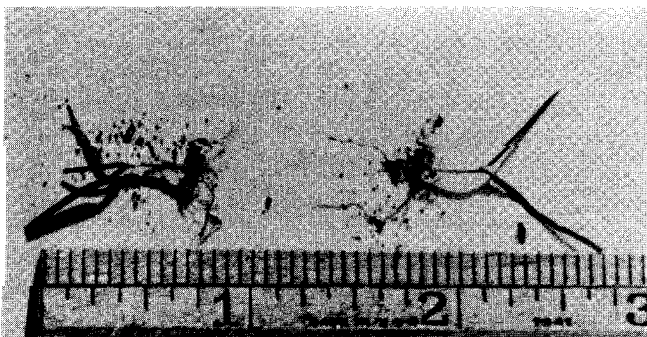
Merion bluegrass has never been entirely free of invasions of crabgrass, bermudagrass, and broad leaved weeds, but it has been resistant in comparison with Kentucky bluegrass. Our first plot of Merion was located adjacent to a plot of Seaside bent, which did not invade appreciably. However, a plot of Kentucky bluegrass at a greater distance was soon seriously contaminated by stolons carried by the mowers.

Merion bluegrass may remain in a turf of U-3 bermudagrass under a definite management system, but it is not probable that this will be reliable in the hands of the average person. We can see little place for this grass in Southern California, except as a possible companion for a warm-season grass. The combination with Meyer zoysia, which has been so conspicuously successful in the belt from Salt Lake City eastward to St. Louis and Washington, D. C., has not yet shown any merit in our trials, although probably there are some areas in California where it may prove to be valuable.

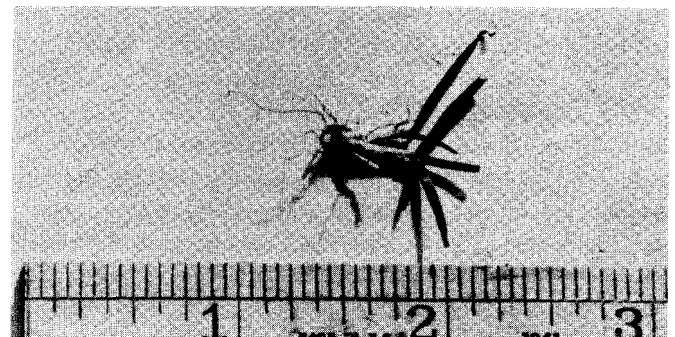
At the present time we do not have a good plot of pure Merion bluegrass. It will survive a year or two longer than ordinary Kentucky bluegrass, but that is all that can be claimed for it in Southern California. However, if the seed were low in cost, it would be possible to use it advantageously for seeding after the renovation of bermudagrass lawns.

The Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation has found that bluegrass lawns are not permanent here and is using a mixture of meadow fescue and redtop for public recreational areas. We would not venture to predict the ultimate usefulness of this truly outstanding grass in Southern California, but we believe that it will be far more important for Northern and Central California. At Davis, and Oakland, Merion bluegrass is particularly successful and assumes a somewhat different vegetative habit.

Merion bluegrass seed will be scarce and expensive for some time to come. Those wishing to obtain it should place orders with their seed dealers in advance. However, in Southern California, the usefulness of Merion bluegrass is very limited, and it is not worth much of a premium in price.



Kentucky bluegrass, showing narrow leaf blades



Merion bluegrass, showing wide leaf blades

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SEDGES AS TURF

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An almost completely neglected field of turf culture is the use of sedges for turf, except possibly in Hawaii. Several years ago in the vicinity of Hollywood and in the San Francisco Bay area, a fleeting interest developed in a turf sedge from India, *Kyllinga brevifolia*. This sedge is a native of India and has narrow straplike foliage. Under proper care it will form a beautiful turf. However, enthusiasm for it evaporated when it was found to show its tropical ancestry by an unattractive brown discoloration in the winter. It would be difficult to find a lawn of it today. Small isolated stands of it may be found on the grounds of the Los Angeles Country Club.

There are several inherent difficulties in the use of sedges, and one is that some of them are exceedingly difficult to mow. However, one sedge from Queensland, Australia, *Cyperus gracilis*, has shown remarkably promising qualities in tests at our plots at 300 Veteran Avenue. This sedge has a fine round blade and resembles Chewing's fescue in texture, but has a brilliant light green color. It can be mowed with an ordinary hand lawn mower, but the blades should be kept sharp. This sedge bears small living plantlets at the top of the culms and is propagated by planting the clippings from mowings after the plantlets have formed. The clippings are handled in a manner similar to bentgrass stolens.

In some of the humid tropical regions of the world where this sedge has been introduced, it is considered aggressive and weedy, but testing for over 18 years in Hawaii has shown that it is not a pest there. In California, the chance of undue aggressiveness is far more remote. It has exhibited only desirable growth habits here.

In Hawaii, this sedge is known as "McCoy grass" and is used for shady lawns, as it may discolor slightly in full sun. In West Los Angeles it can be recommended for

either sun or shade. Further testing will be needed to determine its behavior in hot interior desert areas.

We have been delighted to find that this sedge has thus far not discolored in the winter at temperatures down to almost 25° F. However, at Arcadia, moderate tip discoloration was experienced at 24° F.

In the spring of 1951 an area was planted to plots of several grasses, including rough-stalked meadowgrass and several fescues. One plot of pure *Cyperus gracilis* was included. Under summer conditions with somewhat irregular watering, none of the grasses thrived and the stands deteriorated. On the other hand, the plot containing the sedge was outstanding in appearance even under drought. In Hawaii it is known to tolerate beach conditions. It thrives there under such trees as *Grevillea robusta* under which it is difficult to grow grasses. It is said to take moderate but not heavy wear. In one botanical garden in Hawaii it is mowed every two weeks.

A fair sized partially shaded lawn of this sedge is located at Paul J. Howard's California Flowerland, Barrington and National Boulevard, West Los Angeles.

Although we generally consider sedges to be denizens of moist places, apparently some of them have surprising resistance to drought. One interesting introduced sedge, which has colonized in dry spots under oaks at Arcadia and under deodar cedars in Hollywood, is *Carex texensis*, a species occurring naturally from Georgia and Texas north to Kentucky and South Carolina.

Careful scouting should reveal a variety of species worth testing for turf purposes, but the question of ease of mowing must be kept in mind with all of the sedges, as this is probably the greatest obstacle to the use of some of them.

BULLETIN ON DICHONDRA

In the September issue of "The Flower Grower," an article by Cora A. Harris entitled "Zoysia . . . lawn for the South" is worthy of note. Experiences with only one species, *Zoysia matrella*, were given for the area between North Carolina and Alabama. The system of sprigging is described, in which runners or root fragments from one square yard of turf will cover about 1200 square feet if set twelve inches apart. Many advantages are claimed for this species, including its ability to crowd out bermudagrass. Our tests at Los Angeles with the vegetatively propagated Flawn strain have been highly favorable.

A memiographed bulletin entitled "Dichondra Ground Cover" is now available on request from the office of the Farm and Home Advisor of Los Angeles County, Agricultural Extension Service, 511 East Aliso Street, Los Angeles 12, California. The office phone number is Mutual 3383. The bulletin was prepared by Mr. Jean C. Miller.

A similar bulletin has been prepared by Lloyd P. Sharp, Farm Advisor, Agricultural Extension Service, Room 7, Post Office Building, Riverside, California. It is entitled "Dichondra Repens."