

# TIMELY TURF TOPICS

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## UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION

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**DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS:** Much of the winter injury to turf is caused by the fact that, because of inadequate drainage, the soil remains wet and soggy after thawing. Poor drainage also aggravates the heaving due to alternate freezing and thawing and such heaving is particularly hard on seedling turf. In late fall and winter, therefore, all drainage ditches should be opened if they have become choked. The outlets of all tile lines should be inspected and the catch basins cleaned to allow for a capacity flow of water next spring.

Areas which are known to remain wet for undue lengths of time in the spring might well be provided with tile drains now or during the next few months when weather permits. The water-logged condition which may frequently exist on such areas is likely to encourage snowmold as well as the summer diseases. Also, in water-logged soil, the water replaces the air which is ordinarily present between soil particles and is needed by the roots of plants if normal growth is to take place. On the golf courses such wet areas interfere seriously with early spring playing.

Where seepage from shelves of rock or a hard-pan results in water-logging large areas on hillsides this condition can usually be rather easily remedied by the installation of tile drains on the hillside above the seepage. On golf courses such seepage may affect an entire fairway. During the months of little play the tile drainage system can be installed with a minimum amount of inconvenience to the players.

**PRUNING TREES:** It is well to do all the necessary pruning of trees during the winter months. This work can be done during the spells of good weather and result in the minimum of interference with the use of adjacent turfed areas. This is particularly true on golf courses where there is little play during winter months. In low areas, the removal of tree branches which interfere with adequate circulation of air may help to reduce materially the extent and severity of disease attacks next summer. Shrubs also may be pruned at this time provided they do not flower in the spring. Those which flower in the spring, however, should not be pruned until after their next flowering season.

**COASTING AND SKIING ON TURFED AREAS:** Many golf courses and parks are established on rolling or hilly land which is suitable for skiing or tobogganing. Where possible, these sports should be encouraged because little if any damage is done to turf by these sports provided the areas which are used are kept covered with snow. The injury which does occur is usually due to someone's shuffling across a piece of exposed turf when the surface soil is thawed.

Many fairways with long hills may be used to advantage for slides. Occasionally small areas which have only a thin covering of snow in the morning become bare or nearly so during the middle of the day. If a thin layer of snow is immediately shoveled over such areas it will protect the turf and greatly improve the slide.

For skiing a long hill sloping towards the north or northeast is ideal. Skiing usually results in more injury to young trees and shrubbery than to the turf on a golf course. Therefore, any low trees and shrubs which are near the principal skiing areas and are likely to be largely covered with snow should be marked as clearly as possible.

**SKATING RINKS ON TURF:** In sections of the country where winters are mild to severe it is possible to use turfed areas for winter sports without any serious injury to the grass, provided proper precautions are taken so far as drainage is concerned.

It is frequently believed that a sheet of ice will kill turf and that therefore the idea of a skating rink on a turfed area should be tabooed at the outset. Actually, grass is seldom injured merely by a cover of ice. The injury that is sometimes observed associated with ice sheets is usually caused by standing water rather than by the ice and is particularly likely to occur in low-pocketed areas.

The growth of snowmold fungi (see T.T.T., October, 1940) is encouraged by water and thrives on heavily fertilized grass that is kept covered and wet in the winter. It is therefore important that ample provision is made for the draining of flooded areas when thaws take place. During the warmer periods in winter these fungi may develop on the grass under the ice. To prevent such disease attacks it is well to avoid the application of fertilizer in late summer or fall on areas which are to be flooded. An application of corrosive sublimate or calomel at the rate of 3 or 4 ounces to 1,000 square feet would furnish additional insurance against possible injury from snowmold. The fungicide may be mixed with sand or screened topdressing and applied uniformly over the area just before starting to build up the ice sheet. This latter step is not necessary on well-drained areas or where the turf is composed of disease-resistant types of grasses which have not been over-fertilized. Any slight injury to the turf can usually be taken care of by spring seedings.

Any reasonably flat area on golf courses, lawns or parks where water is readily available may be flooded to make a skating rink. The ground should be well frozen before starting to build up the sheet of ice. Not only does this protect the grass but it increases the chances of getting good ice without the formation of troublesome air pockets or shell ice. If there is snow on the ground it should be removed before the area is flooded. Boards 8 to 10 inches wide make a sufficiently high outer wall to the rink to build the ice against, and are easily removed when the ice begins to melt. Packed wet snow may also be used as an outer wall against which to build the rink.

Better skating ice is made by frequent light sprayings than by heavy flooding. Each successive layer of water should be sufficiently thin to freeze rapidly and not run off the area, since it is this latter process which causes "shell ice". Every effort should be made to keep the ice free from leaves, cigarette butts, sticks or other dark objects since they absorb light and heat from the sun and may "burn" holes through the ice.

When such skating rinks are established in public areas such as golf courses and parks it is well, when possible, to have separate rinks for hockey and general skating. Where those who are using the rinks are sufficiently interested in figure skating to justify special consideration, special hours may be reserved for figure skaters or one section of the rink may be set aside for their use.

The establishment of skating rinks on golf courses and parks will do much to stimulate off-season interest in the clubs and parks. In order to continue to attract the skaters, however, the ice must be kept in good condition. Imperfections in the ice due to cracks, "warts", "blisters", etc., should be remedied by filling, planing, spraying or any other satisfactory methods.

**OHIO SHORT COURSE:** Dr. Monteith and John Bengston have been invited to represent the Green Section on the program of the Ohio short course for greenkeepers which is to be held December 10 to 12 in Columbus. It is to be sponsored by the College of Agriculture of Ohio State University and details concerning the course may be obtained from George M. McClure, Assistant Professor of Agronomy in the College of Agriculture at Columbus. He has informed us that a registration fee of \$5.00 will be charged to help defray the expenses incurred in giving the course.

**WINTER SPORTS ON GOLF COURSES:** Accommodations for winter sports can be provided readily on golf courses by the greenkeeper and his helpers. These sports will encourage the members and their entire families to use the club facilities the year around. Where the winters are only moderately severe, skating rinks, slides, and ski-jumps cannot be maintained continuously. However, club members can be notified easily whenever conditions are favorable for winter sports.

In addition to increasing the interest in the club, the providing of facilities for winter sports will furnish winter employment for at least some of the greenkeeping force. In this way the most desirable workmen can be retained throughout the season. When the greenkeeper can thus hold his best workmen year after year, better and more efficient turf maintenance may be expected.

**CARE OF EQUIPMENT:** During the months when machinery and tools are not in constant use, they should be overhauled and gotten ready for next year. During this time they may well be cleaned and painted, all movable parts oiled or greased, and all worn or broken parts replaced. Such treatment of any or all of the equipment will insure its longer life and more efficient service next spring and summer when the pressure of turf maintenance jobs does not leave time for such care of the equipment. Pieces of equipment which cannot thus be repaired should be replaced before spring.

**WORKSHOPS:** The overhauling of equipment in use on golf courses or parks involves the necessity of a workshop in which to do this work and materials and tools with which to work. This is the time of year to take stock of what buildings are available on the grounds for this sort of work as well as for the shelter and protection of machinery, tools, and materials which are used during the growing season. If new construction or repair work is necessary in order to furnish such facilities, now would be the time to do it, in order to have the buildings to use during the remainder of the winter.

**CLEARING UP OVERGROWN AREAS:** Undesirable undergrowth and objectionable thickets can be cleared out whenever the weather permits either in late fall or during the winter. Where soil erosion is not to be feared, there is no need for postponing the job of burning over the rough until spring when there will be so many jobs waiting to be done. Doing such clean-up jobs during the winter will contribute to more efficient maintenance programs next spring.

**MAKING WAY FOR THE MOWER:** Expenses of mower repairs next spring and summer will be materially reduced if areas which are to be kept cut are cleared of all rock outcroppings, stumps, and the like. The players, too, will appreciate their removal from fairways and rough and from recreation areas in the parks. In many cases, the quickest and most successful removal of these obstructions may involve the necessity of using dynamite. On parks and golf courses such a blasting program cannot be carried out during these seasons in which the grounds are being used by players. Moreover, there is little time for such work during that part of the year when turf maintenance problems must occupy practically all of the time and attention of the greenkeeper and his workmen. The off-season months are therefore the time in which this work can best be done.

**WINTER HELP ON GOLF COURSES:** If turf is to be maintained efficiently and satisfactorily on golf courses during the season of play, some help certainly should be maintained throughout the off-season. Often, serious interruptions and inconveniences can be avoided during the golf season by the judicious use of labor during the off-season. Many jobs could be done during the winter months, which when put off until spring, result in confusion during the rush season.

On most courses it should be possible to keep some of the greenkeeping force well-occupied through the winter months on jobs which will result in more efficient maintenance of turf during the following season of play and fewer complaints from the players.