



KEN'S KORNER

Fairy Rings

Every year about the time of late June, irregularly shaped and sized, dark green, arcs and circles appear on most of our greens. These patches, referred to as “fairy ring”, are caused by many different basidiomycetes fungi which colonize in the soil and break down organic matter, stimulating the turf with nitrogen. In lawns and higher cut turf, the fungi may also produce a circle of mushrooms (unfortunately poisonous). In the most severe cases, turf is lost due to nitrogen burn, but for the most part, and in our case, damage is only aesthetic!



Fairy Rings have been around for a long time and are part of folklore



legends. Long ago, it was thought that fairies (pixies) came out late at night and danced in circles, sitting upon the mushrooms to rest and talk. Therefore, the name “fairy ring” was originated. Other lore has it that the ring marks forever a lightning strike. It has also been told that the ring is the spot on which the devil churns his butter! Science gives us the more modern explanation, but unfortunately, an explanation that is not as fun or as imaginative!

I suspect that our fairy ring fungi came with the original soil that was pushed up to form our greens. The soil, rich in organic matter, was the perfect environment for the fungal colonies to start. New, naturally occurring organic matter (mostly from dying roots, insects, etc), continue to sustain these colonies.

There are a few fungicides labeled for fairy ring, but unfortunately their use increases the severity of other diseases that actually kill the turf. For this reason, we do not treat for fairy ring. Instead we try to manage fairy ring through fertilization and careful, attentive watering.

Ken Thompson
Golf Course Superintendent
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It's always a Greate day at Greate Bay!