

Arlington Turf Gardens

In 1906, Dr. Walter S. Harban, an officer of the Columbia Country Club in Washington, D.C., contacted USDA Division of Agrostology scientists Charles V. Piper and Russell A. Oakley, seeking their advice on problems at the club's putting greens.¹

In 1908, Charles B. MacDonald, the architect designing the National Links at Southampton, Long Island, contacted the USDA for help due to the problems he was experiencing establishing turf on the sand dunes there.²

In 1915, the executive committee of the U.S. Golf Association met with Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston, to ask for help in solving "the problems of greenskeeping," which at the time involved an estimated \$10 million investment per year on by golf clubs in the United States.³

The result was the creation of the Arlington Turf Gardens in 1916, where Piper, Oakley and other USDA scientists grew, evaluated and selected improved grasses for putting greens.⁴

Early research at Arlington yielded important contributions to the field of turfgrass improvement. Experiments included study of mercurials for control of turfgrass disease, earthworm control, comparisons between sulfate of ammonia (acid residual) fertilizers and nitrate of soda (alkaline) fertilizers for weed control, and selection and vegetative propagation of bent grasses.⁵

¹ "History of Arlington Turf Gardens." *The Greenskeepers' Reporter*, March 1937, page 46

² "Turfgrass – its Development and Progress" by T. T. Taylor. *USGA Journal and Turf Management*, September 1957, page 8.

³ "The Arlington Turf Garden" by John Montieth, Jr. *The Bulletin of the United States Golf Association Green Section*. December 1928. 8(12), page 245.

⁴ "Urban, Suburban and Rural Amenities of Grass" by A. J. Turgeon. Chapter 8 from *Grassland: Quietness and Strength for a New American Agriculture*, Walter F. Wedin and Steven L. Fales, editors. (Madison, WI : American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Society of America, 2009) page 144.

<http://plantscience.psu.edu/research/centers/turf/research/papers/2009/pub-grassland>

⁵ "Turfgrass – its Development and Progress" by T. T. Taylor. *USGA Journal and Turf Management*, September 1957. Page 30.