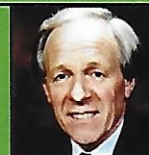


Where the grass is always greener



Greencraft
With Dave Bracey

GETTING THE GREEN IN SHAPE FOR NEXT SEASON

WITH the Summer season now over, and what a generally baking one it was, we should be all thinking about what work is required to improve the surface of the green for next year. The most immediate thought that comes to mind is to realise the importance of spiking as deeply and as often as possible during the root growing season (closed season).

I visited a number of greens during the Summer and received many letters and telephone calls about the condition of greens and in the majority of cases much of the stress could have been avoided had more spiking been carried out.

Once a fortnight is not really enough to ensure that as much water as possible moves down through the turf and into the base to be re-used during the Summer months by the deeper rooted grasses of Fescue and Agrostis.

On the greens I visited these grasses had withstood the adverse weather conditions, but, of course, annual meadow grass was the first to react to the extreme conditions.

This was indicated by a few seeds from each plant, the parent had died

and disintegrated, and it was a long time before the seed it had sown had recovered and germinated when water was applied or it had rained.

We are all reluctant to use watering systems as it interferes with play. There is no such thing as the perfect pop-up system, as often there is three times more water in one area than another. Many greens I visited where pop-up systems were used indicated insufficient water on much of the green when it had been thought that it had been watered properly.

Pop-up systems are useful, but ideally should be used where they can occasionally be watched to see what is happening with the water. The reason for this is:

***The direction and force of the wind – uneven watering, although the system was switched on.**

***Obstructions to the prevailing wind, i.e. the bowls clubhouse, hedges and trees can prevent water falling on the green.**

It must be realised that these obstructions will deflect airflow seven times the height of the obstruction before airflow will return to ground

level. A clubhouse that is ten feet high will deflect prevailing wind a distance of seventy feet before it returns to the turf level, in other words halfway across the bowling green.

***Any fault on the system, i.e. blocked jets or nozzles will only be spotted and corrected if noticed.**

In conclusion, the major job throughout the winter is spiking either with solid, chisel, root pruning or diamond tines. Knocking holes is of paramount importance.

Scarifying

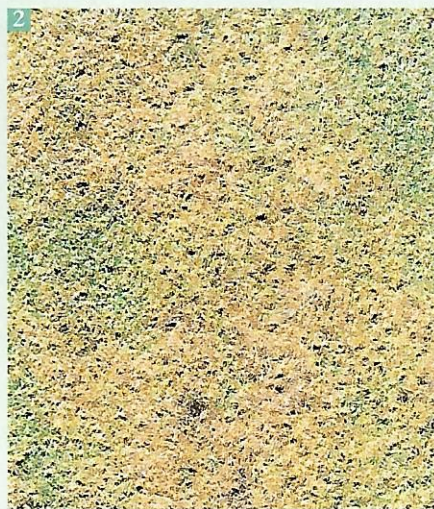
It must be realised that grasses are living plants, the leaves do not get longer and longer, as once a leaf has produced the materials for more leaves, it will deteriorate in colour and function.

Leaves can sometimes last for sixty days, so we continually have dying parts of the plant being discarded and the use of brushing, switching or drag matting are methods to remove debris as often as possible.

Failure to do this will result in this



Above: The Sarrel spike roller used to a depth of 50mm (two inches) on discoloured areas of the green once the surface is moist. A giant water square sprinkler can be seen in the background.



Left: A close up of the turf once the Sarrel roller has been applied. The fawn coloured areas is annual meadow grass having died off.

FOLLOWING my article last month concerning discolouration of the turf during the Summer, picture 1 shows the Sarrel spiker ready to be used on the irrigated turf to allow penetration of the spikes. Extensive use of this tool over the discoloured areas is absolutely essential for the recovery of the turf.

Picture 2 shows a close up of the spiked stressed area. Note the fawn colour is the dead and dying annual meadow grass.

Picture 3 shows the familiar sight many of you will have seen and this is caused by throwing the bowl onto the green. As you can see a considerable amount of damage has been done.

Readers' suggestions on how to eliminate this habit would be welcomed. Please note that the green was not wet when the photograph was taken.



The damage caused on the green after just one evening match by bowlers throwing their bowls onto the surface, and on this particular night the green was not wet.

Dave Bracey can be contacted at 'Slotters', The Warren, Croydon Road, Hayes, Kent BR2 7AL (Tel: 020 8462 7667) or via Bowls International.