



David Bracey

Top expert helps to keep your green in trim



Scarify & Spike

That's the key winter message

NOW the outdoor season is over for another year, club committees around the country are evaluating the performance of the green. The ever-increasing cost of maintaining a green must be equated with whether the surface improved from the previous year, bearing in mind any difficult weather conditions.

If you were running the club as a business, then it would need to show a healthy profit. Likewise, in the case of a bowling club, the green should show a continuous improvement in order to keep members content, as a club is only as good as its bowling green.

How do you determine what needs to be done on the green during the winter?

It is the work during the closed season that produces a good playing surface the following summer. The more work put in out of season, then the better chance you have of providing an improved bowling green - it's as simple as that.

Two of the most important tasks during

the winter are scarifying and aerating.

Scarifying is clearing out the dead, dying and diseased material that has accumulated during the playing season.

If regular scarifying has taken place throughout the season then there should be far less thatch to be removed during the autumn renovation programme.

It is important to remember that the turf must have adequate moisture available in the soil when scarifying. This not only lubricates the reels, making it not only easier to clean out the debris, but also enables repairs to the perennial grasses.

If there is not sufficient scarifying done during the winter then the debris is food for the fungi that lay dormant in the turf and the soil and fungi can cause extreme disfigurement when active and is difficult to rectify.

So the message is: Clear out the dead or you will have problems!

AERATION or spiking is also essential on a regular basis between the end of the

season and the following March. This will allow extensive root development, bacterial activity and breakdown of debris in the soil to allow nutrients to reach the lower levels to encourage deeper rooting of the finer grasses of Fescue and Agrostis.

There will be no point in applying spring fertiliser unless spiking has been done because there will be no holes for the nutrients to make their way down to the root system. The soil needs to be loosened up to create spaces for the active ingredients in the fertiliser to penetrate deeper into the soil.

Water will also be inclined to accumulate on the surface if there is a lack of spiking, thus keeping the surface cold and this valuable commodity will be lost through evaporation created by sun and wind, and, as a result, the turf will suffer from drying out.

NEXT MONTH

Rolling and hollow tining