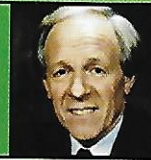


Where the grass is always greener



Greencraft
With Dave Bracey

PUTTING THE GREEN TO BED

IT'S that of the year when the greenkeepers begin one of their most important periods of the whole annual timetable - putting the green to bed for the Winter - so it's worth reflecting on some of the key issues.

Having surveyed the green to see where the levels need improvements, hollow tining should be carried out, but only once every three years.

Afterwards, the holes should be left open to increase bacterial activity and allow gas exchange. After two weeks, go over the green with solid tines, which will effectively squeeze the holes together.

Before buying expensive top dressing material, make certain the green really requires it. If the levels are wrong, then they must be corrected, but possibly the money could be spent on equipment.

Greens where Sarrel spiking has been carried out regularly are more prone to leatherjacket invasion than others, so now is the time to apply insecticide.

Put the green to bed for the Winter by scarifying, making several passes with the thatch removal reel and rid the green of as much annual meadow grass as possible, then mow off cleanly.

As grass has a limited life, it is necessary to oversow lightly with perennial grasses. Sow early in October while the ground is still warm. Avoid ready made mixes as the fine seed ends up at the bottom of the sack and anyway different grasses have different depth requirements. Each green will require 12kg chewings fescue and 4kg browntop.

Ideally a seed slotter makes a perfectly

shaped pocket in which to sow the seed. Start by sowing the fescues, which must lie flat and see that they are buried into half an inch of soil.

Then sow the fine browntop on the surface. If the weather is dry, be ready to water to help germination.

Raise the cut from a quarter of an inch to half an inch, as this allows more leaf area to manufacture food, enabling the roots to forage deeper.

When we move into November, that is the time for levelling work. The survey itself can be fitted in earlier, but this is how to go about it. Mark the green at one-yard intervals with string pulled tightly from one side to the other. Then look along the lines to see the undulations in the places where the turf falls away from the string.

Using diluted emulsion paint, mark the low areas with a line painted at right angles to the string. Then indicate the direction of the dip by painting another line six inches long along the string line, leaving a T-shaped mark.

Move the string over yard by yard until the whole green is covered. With all the low areas highlighted, make an assessment of the amount of sharp sand required for levelling. To raise the undulations, screed lime-free sand on top of the turf. Then pressing a thick-pronged hand fork into the turf, prise it up and as you lift it the sand will run into the holes.

Maintain the height of cut at half an inch and keep the surface clean and dry to avoid fungal disease. A low nitrogen Autumn fertiliser can be applied.



Slotting and seeding in progress. Slots ready for the seed to be scattered and lightly brushed into the holes.

Brand New Series Starts Soon

LOOK out shortly for the start of a major new and exclusive series on greenkeeping from our resident expert, Dave Bracey, one of the leading fine turf practitioners in the country.

It will be a comprehensive, yet easy-to-follow guide to greenkeeping, providing all the basic instruction and advice you'll ever need on every aspect of the art of keeping a bowling green in tip-top condition.

With more and more clubs having to

rely on willing volunteers, this new series will be an essential piece of equipment, even to the more experienced among the many thousands of greenkeepers around the country.

So make certain of your copy next month when you can start to collect one of the most comprehensive series on basic greenkeeping ever produced, enabling you to expand your knowledge on what is one of the most important functions within our sport.