

AUTUMN MAINTENANCE ON THE GOLF COURSE

by

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ONCE again the time approaches when greenkeepers will be at their busiest with the thousand and one jobs that arise after the final competition of the summer. Autumn with its relatively high temperatures and expected rainfall usually provides suitable conditions for most of the major tasks like aeration, top dressing, renovation and turfing.

The increasing popularity of golf recently has demonstrated the inadequacies of teeing space on many courses which have perhaps several tees of 70—100 sq. yds. each. Many clubs have commenced a reconstruction programme whereby such small tees are absorbed into one long, large tee, which is easier to maintain and, with regular movement of markers, withstands wear and tear better.

Available good top soil need not be wasted in the building up of foundations which can consist of sub-soil, but the surface should have a minimum depth of 6 in. good top soil. Terracing of tees should be avoided unless absolutely necessary as this wastes space and can create difficulties in maintenance. Turfing is most popular for establishing new tees. A tee laid in the autumn should be fit for play in the following spring. Suitable turf can often be found at the side of a fairway.

Truing-up

On established tees, the surfaces should be level and true. Sometimes sinkage occurs and autumn is the best time for surface restoration. The turf is stripped off, more soil added and perhaps a little fertiliser raked into the surface and the turf, if suitable, relaid. The tee should then be liberally top-dressed with sandy compost to help seal the cracks.

Hollows on fairways should also be rectified during the autumn. These are usually caused by the decay of a tree stump or root or general settlement. Such irregularities can be corrected by cutting parallel slits across the hollows, arising up the strips of turf and packing new soil underneath with shovels.

Many failures in wormkilling are due to materials being applied at the wrong time of year. During the summer when conditions are fairly dry the worms are less active near the surface and consequently less easy to kill. Also such materials as lead arsenate and chlordane adhere to the foliage of the grass for some time and if mowing is being carried out frequently a high proportion of the wormkiller can be removed with the cuttings. October or November is therefore about the most suitable time for this job.

Precaution

Unfortunately the autumn weather usually brings with it the likelihood of disease attack, especially Fusarium patch disease. It is well known that prevention is better than cure and a wise greenkeeper gives preventive fungicidal

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treatment during the autumn, especially on courses where disease attacks are a regular autumn occurrence.

Many clubs allow infection to get out of hand before taking any action where-upon it may require several applications of fungicide every 10 or 14 days to bring about any control. It is far better to be constantly on the lookout for symptoms and treat affected greens immediately the disease is spotted. In this way one application of fungicide will probably be sufficient to check the disease.

Giving air

The aeration of turf is a job which should really be done all year round, except, of course, when the course is under frost or snow. However, this is not always practicable and very often ground conditions are such that tines would hardly penetrate the surface. The main aeration programme is usually therefore confined to the autumn and in some cases to the early spring. Aeration can be done either mechanically or by hand and the actual method by which it is carried out depends largely on the condition of the turf and the labour

available. Fibrous and compacted turf will require hollow tine forking whereas on turf which is not so hard and compacted, solid tining would suffice.

Top dressing on greens should be considered an integral part of the maintenance of a golf course. A good, friable compost and sand mixture or, if compost is not available, soil, sand and peat make a suitable top dressing. There are several reasons for applying top dressings, the main one being to create a true and even surface. Good top soil becomes more scarce year by year and one should always be on the lookout for the occasional load which may become available. Sand is usually incorporated to maintain an open and free draining surface and without its inclusion it would be very difficult to work in the top dressing. Heavy dressings of sand alone should be avoided since heavy sand dressings are liable to form a "root-break". Peat should be a finely granulated material. It adds extra organic matter to a dressing of sand and soil. Wood charcoal is sometimes used in top dressings, especially where damp or stagnant conditions prevail. $\frac{1}{8}$ in. gauge charcoal is usually the most suitable for greens.

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