

WINTER WORK

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Mr Baylis was with the Institute for nearly six years, and has now returned to Monmouthshire to run the family farm on the retirement of his parents.

The past warm summer has produced not only good golfing conditions but an abundance of fruits and berries which have now ripened on trees and bushes. If folk lore runs true, a long and severe winter may be in the offing. One suspects this even more so because last winter was very mild indeed. Bearing these thoughts in mind any outstanding items of routine autumn work should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

PLANNING

There are very few golf courses these days where the staff look upon winter as a rather "dead" period when the main occupation during working hours are drinking tea and playing cards. Few of us enjoy working in wet or cold conditions but if some time is given to producing a flexible plan of the season's work, staff can be kept interested and occupied both usefully and profitably through the winter, even where no major projects are under consideration. Many clubs have plans for very full winter programmes this year which leave those who will be implementing them in no doubt that every available minute must be used to best advantage.

WINTER TEES AND FROST HOLES

As the weather deteriorates, a great deal of damage to the major playing areas can be prevented if markers are placed on winter tees where these are available. Recovery of areas worn out by summer play on the major tees can be encouraged by providing adequate aeration and oversowing the worn parts, even though the season may be quite well advanced. Establishment from seed may not be entirely satisfactory but a combination of some young seedlings and natural recovery growth of the existing sward should produce a reasonable grass cover by spring. A few local

areas, possibly tees serving short holes, may require to be completely returfed.

The majority of greenkeepers appreciate the value of using either completely separate frost holes or siting pins on aprons in winter where the terrain allows. There can be no clear-cut rules defining when frost holes should be brought into use. Only the greenkeeper can decide. But it should be remembered that both short and long-term damage can be caused to fine turf by players using it not only in frosty or thawing conditions but also when the surface is excessively wet. When the greens themselves must be used right through the winter, compaction around the old hole sites should be relieved by thoroughly solid-tining the affected areas each time the pins are moved.

TROLLEYS

These aids to golf create work for the greenkeepers and some form of restriction may be deemed necessary in the winter particularly on heavy land courses. Trolley paths usually erode badly and frequently the most positive solution to the problem is to provide hard paths of ashes or gravel rather than repeatedly turf the worn parts each year.

OVERHAULING MACHINES

After a season's work most mowing machines on golf courses require a thorough overhaul which usually involves sending them to a service agent though some greenkeepers feel confident to do the work on the premises. This type of job and the inevitable routine painting obviously come into the category of bad weather work. If machines are despatched for service in early winter there is adequate time for them to be returned and tested before they are put to work again the following spring.

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If possible one machine should be on hand all winter for topping any growth which occurs in mild spells. Last winter considerable growth took place and some greens particularly in the south of the country were very woolly indeed at times.

REPLENISHMENT OF COMPOST SUPPLIES

It is necessary to maintain continuity of supply year after year and compost production must be thought of as routine work on good courses. Those who do not already make their own compost should try to launch a system this winter by building up heaps of layered top soil and leaf mould or other organic matter. Certainly the work is arduous and it is worth inquiring whether finances would permit acquisition of helpful equipment such as a tractor fore-end loader.

BUDGETING

Whilst the staff are busy with manual tasks (probably one or other of those already discussed) the head greenkeeper will require to devote a good deal of attention to budgeting for the coming year. Costs continue to rise steadily and estimates should therefore be slightly generous and there is of course always a risk that the committee will prune one's estimate in any case.

TREES

A great deal of money is spent each

year planting trees on golf courses and it is pleasing to see how in a very few seasons these young plantations enhance the scene. Young trees planted during the autumn or very early spring usually establish most readily provided the weather is reasonably open when the operation is carried out.

In some cases trees are a hindrance to turf maintenance and occasionally it is necessary to lop offending branches where these shade or overhang greens and tees. When planting saplings in the past insufficient thought was given to the mature size of the trees and one is sometimes forced to fell half-grown timber because of its proximity to fine turf areas.

If not kept in check self-sown trees can imperceptibly crowd around important turf areas and drastic thinning must be carried out in these instances.

It is often not appreciated how far tree roots ramify in search of nutrients and moisture or how much they can leech turf. Poplars are notorious in this respect and should not be planted within a day's march of fine turf. Where root invasion of, for example, a green occurs, it is necessary to trench deeply between the tree and affected turf so that offending roots can be severed. The risk of suckers developing on the detached roots can be minimised by

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painting the cut ends with a strong solution of 245 T weedkiller.

DRAINAGE

Whether a new system is to be installed or an existing one overhauled, plans and other preparatory works should be completed well in advance of the actual scheme. If the services of contractors are to be enlisted a specification detailing all the work involved is an absolute must and help with preparing the documents can be obtained from the Research Station. If possible, material to be used should be delivered to the site during dry weather otherwise lorries bringing aggregate or pipes may have to unload some distance from the working area. The land requiring draining is of course likely to be particularly wet during autumn and winter.

CONSTRUCTION WORK

On established courses all the routine autumn/winter maintenance tasks should

take priority over alterations in design unless a loss of land through road works etc. makes the project essential. One finds that where clubs have become engrossed in altering the course the general standard of maintenance often gradually deteriorates.

The same rules as outlined for drainage schemes regarding planning, preparation of specifications and importing materials etc. also apply. Grading of subsoil and all top soil movements should be completed when the land is in a reasonably dry state. In practice these ideals are more likely to be achieved where the work is done during summer. Schemes prepared for sowing in early autumn are often well carried out because the operations are appropriately timed. When turfing is to be the means of establishment the attitude that there is no hurry for doing *anything* until autumn or early winter sometimes develops; consequently results may be unsatisfactory due to work being continued in bad weather as the fear of not completing the job before spring approaches reality.



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