

The Importance of Weather

By J. PERRIS, B.Sc.

Advisory Officer at the Sports Turf Research Institute

NOW that the days are lengthening out thoughts begin to turn once more to the coming spring and summer months. Will it be another period of prolonged dry sunny spells as in 1969 or will it return to the more usual showery weather that we are accustomed to? Due to this unpredictability of our weather it is necessary for the British Greenkeeper to be amongst the most adaptable of workers in the world. He knows that it does not matter how much time and effort is put into a particular job, the weather will play an important part in the ultimate result.

However, it is perhaps well worth while to recapitulate whilst there is time the effects of weather and climate on certain operations.

Scarification

The salient point to bear in mind with scarifying or chain harrowing any area is that this work should only be carried out whilst the grass is making quite strong growth. Beware of sudden cold winds in the early spring period which will check growth, and similarly hot dry spells during the summer months.

If scarification has been carried out and hot dry weather ensues, the chance of damage to the turf could be reduced perhaps by applying liberal amounts of water. Needless to say, however, a dry surface condition would be desirable when the scarifying is performed.

Fertiliser treatment

The greens especially will need a balanced feed in the spring and correct timing will be very important. Fertiliser should not be applied too early to try to force growth, so wait until the winter is well and truly over. Probably late March/early April is about the "average" time for the first fertiliser application in the South of England, with two or three weeks' delay the further one goes North. All fertiliser applications should be made during

showery weather. On fine turf areas, unless it rains within a day or so after the fertiliser application, the materials should be artificially watered into the surface, ensuring application by means which will not wash the fertiliser into "drifts". Watering is particularly important with regard to summer fertiliser treatment of which more than one application is often required.

Aeration.

Normal spring and summer aeration can only be safely carried out whilst moist growing conditions prevail and are expected for the few following days. If spiking has taken place and a sudden dry spell occurs, some relief could again be obtained by applying liberal amounts of water to the spiked areas. However, there are occasions when shallower surface pricking is beneficial during dry conditions to aid the percolation of moisture when carrying out artificial watering.

Mowing

Do not be too hasty when lowering the height of cut during the early spring period, but, on the other hand, hasten to lift the mower blades slightly if any drought conditions occur. Also, as all practical men know, a far neater and quicker job can be achieved when mowing is carried out under dry conditions.

Fungicide and weedkiller application

These materials are best applied on a still, dry day when there is little chance of immediate precipitation. Good growing conditions must also exist when applying weedkiller to minimise the risk of scorch and obtain the maximum effect of the materials. Many turf diseases require moisture to survive and therefore the need to apply a fungicide could perhaps be reduced by switching the turf on mornings when there is a heavy dew. Should disease be noted,

however, immediate fungicide application should take place if it is not raining etc., irrespective of the time of year.

Drought conditions

The grass plant is about 90 per cent water and transpires many times its own weight during growth and so turf should have an adequate supply of water in which to grow and survive. In periods of drought therefore, it may be necessary to water the turf occasionally. Water should be applied before the effects of drought are obvious, ensuring that the soil is thoroughly moistened to a depth of at least 4 inches.

Construction work

Besides affecting the success of maintenance work the weather also largely determines the progress and quality of the construction of any new areas. Construction work should be avoided when ground conditions are wet, particularly if heavy equipment is being

used, as wet working results in the loss of soil structure and adversely affects the natural drainage qualities of the soil. Grass seed needs a warm and moist soil in which to germinate and grow and so the seeding of newly constructed areas is best left until about the end of August when the soil is warm and, once there is sufficient water for germination, there is little risk of drought affecting the seedling turf.

Summary

An ability to read the weather and its implications is a great asset to any Greenkeeper and one worth developing. Following the weather forecast each evening is a good idea. Even if terms such as Anti-cyclone or Depression are not fully understood, one can always turn to the Shakespearian practice of judging...

“By the complexity of the sky
The state and inclination of the day”.

RANSOMES APPOINT PERMANENT NORTH AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE

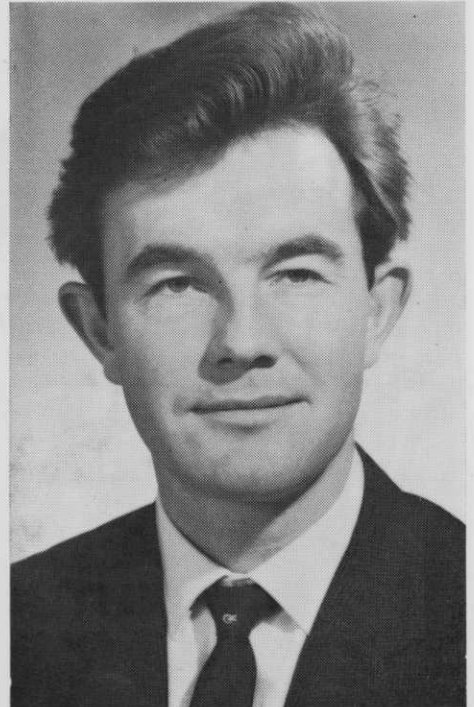
Thirty-three-year-old Ted Reilly, one of Ransomes most experienced sales representatives, will be permanently based in the North-Eastern States from March 1970.

Ransomes, manufacturers of the largest range of grass machinery in Europe and makers of grass cutters since 1832, look to Ted Reilly to expand the market for their machines.

To back him Ted Reilly has had 17 years with Ransomes as a Field Engineer, and as a demonstrator in his early days. This was followed by extensive experience as a representative in England and Ireland.

H. Pattison & Co., Ltd. are reinstating a machine which was very popular with golf clubs and councils until they stopped making it a few years ago. It is the Pattison Rotary Sifter, for screening compost, ashes, etc., which has been a popular item for at least 30 years.

Having improved the design for economical production, they reckon to have them available for sale commencing in April this year.



For further details write to Messrs H. Pattison & Co., Ltd., Stanmore, Middlesex.