

Be Prepared

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At this less busy time in the calendar when the weather may have temporarily closed the course or may prevent outside work, some thought can be given to the coming months and growing season. Once spring growth is under way and the usual pressures return, time will be at a premium. Now is the moment for preparation and planning to make life easier and happier in the months ahead.

Present problems

Aim at completing the current jobs on hand as soon as possible and certainly before the spring rush begins. As well as outstanding drainage work, unfinished course alterations such as tee extensions, etc, should be the immediate concern when favourable weather allows. When really bad conditions stop outside work, however, do not neglect other essentials such as preparing compost. Lopping tree branches, hedging and fencing work may also be tasks to finish but in the meantime still keep an eye open for sudden problems such as an outbreak of *Fusarium* patch disease.

Machinery

A golf course that starts the growing season with machines out of commission is starting off on the wrong foot. Every machine on the course should be systematically inspected in the winter months to make sure that it is capable of working to maximum efficiency. Worn parts should be renewed, engines overhauled if necessary and if this means sending the machine away, insist that it is returned properly serviced in good time. Do not overlook the smallest detail and if experience has shown a component of a particular machine to be susceptible to breakdown it is worthwhile getting a spare in stock.

Course sundries such as hole cups, flagsticks, tee markers, etc, should all be examined and where necessary repaired and painted. Advantage should also be taken during any brief mild spells of weather to see that there are no faults with the watering system. Do not forget to check hoses and couplings which can sometimes perish after a few months storage.

Materials

Careful choosing of the right materials at the right price will please a lot of people in many ways. If there is any doubt about the suitability of a material for a particular purpose, e.g., selective weedkiller for use on the greens, etc, take expert advice.

Accurately calculate the exact needs before ordering so that you are not short at a crucial time in the summer. When the various materials are delivered make sure that they are stored under the conditions that the manufacturers specify. If, for example, it is advised that a tin of fungicide is best stored in a cool, dry cupboard, try and ensure that this is done. Careless storage is very frequently never discovered until the material is required, when it is then often found to have deteriorated to the point of

worthlessness or, at the least, great inconvenience. Poisonous chemicals should, of course, be kept under lock and key and when such materials are used the recommended safety codes should be rigorously followed—remember careless mistakes could be fatal.

When samples of substances such as sand and soil are available, ask for them. You may find that the sand or soil is not really up to the standard you require.

Keep a check on all the materials bought and applied; such information may come in use next year. As well as having current greenkeeper's magazines or the back pages of *The Sports Turf Research Institute's Journal* at hand it is also wise to make out a list of your suppliers with telephone numbers, etc, so that should any emergency arise, an accurate bank of information is quickly available. Such recording is, of course, not only valuable and applicable to ordering materials but all other aspects of golf course maintenance work.

Diary

Besides checking machines, ordering materials, etc, there are many other small points about which some advance knowledge and preparation would be useful. Incidentals such as checking with the Club Secretary on fixtures and important tournaments for the coming season often save tempers and embarrassment later. Another wise action at this stage is to make initial contact and tentative arrangements with any firms from whom you may hire machinery later in the year.

Finally

Despite the most thorough preparation and organising it is still possible that some unexpected problems will occur. In a way, it could be said that you must prepare yourself to accept this. Many greenkeepers have the confidence and ability to overcome such difficulties but if there are any gaps in your knowledge which could lead to a situation in which you would be a little uncertain what to do, now is the time to ask or read and find out.

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