

Winter Maintenance

by

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THE WINTER PERIOD may be the time when there are fewer golfers about, and when the weather is rather inclement for working outside at times, but there is still a fairly full programme of work which should be carried out on the golf course. This work is required whether the committee wants any major construction work done or not. As in the summer, there is no reason why the staff should not be usefully occupied although there is not the same urgency.

OUTSIDE WORK

Greens

In the winter there is not a great deal which can be done on the main putting surfaces although the few items involved are important.

Aeration work should be carried out occasionally when suitable weather conditions allow. Slit or solid tine aeration should be provided and hand spiking may be necessary in addition on some wetter areas in order to achieve a general improvement. With soil conditions being naturally more moist in the winter there are more opportunities to achieve deeper penetration, thus allowing water to pass more easily to underlying levels or to drains. Spiking is required particularly where main greens receive heavy winter use.

In the late autumn and early spring, Fusarium patch disease may appear and a supply of a suitable fungicide should be in stock to provide treatment at the first sign of disease. If the course is prone to Fusarium attack, then preventive sprayings may be carried out but this is not generally recommended. Switching regularly to drop dews in the mornings can help in disease prevention.

During the same period, when mild, moist weather conditions prevail, worm activity may reach proportions when control measures become necessary. Care should be taken to apply the chemical strictly at the rate stated on the container.

Topping of the greens with the mowers set high should be carried out not only to maintain a tidy appearance but also to prevent the sward growing too long and thus becoming more susceptible to disease attack. This work should be confined to periods of open weather when there is little chance of a severe frost.

Winter greens or temporary greens should have been prepared during the late summer and autumn period but, if the surfaces have become soft and bumpy, do not hesitate to apply a light dressing of a suitable sand.

Tees

To maintain reasonably open surfaces on the tees, thorough slit or solid tine aeration should be provided on occasions during the winter. Light sanding of winter teeing areas can also be carried out to maintain firm, dry stances for the golfer. Any tees which have been badly worn as a result of summer play should be renovated by turfing, in the early part of the winter, using turf from either a nursery or a suitable 'out of the way' part of the course, e.g. practice ground. Top dressing with a sandy compost to true-up levels after turfing is also important.