

Ford Tractors Help Solve Drainage Problems On Golf Courses



A 1910 Ford Compact tractor with turf splitter and a 1210 tractor with mole plough at Thorndon Park.

With the combination of lightweight, but powerful, tractors from Ford and turf/grassland tyres, it is now possible to drain and maintain golf courses on heavy clay land throughout the year.

At Thorndon Park golf course, near Brentwood in Essex, the underlying clay soil had produced a bad drainage problem, particularly on the greens, resulting in waterlogging, with related

diseases.

To overcome this and to improve turf quality, a Verti-drain was purchased to remove cores of clay soil. The holes are then filled by a sandy loam mixture encouraging good drainage.

"We purchased the Verti-drain to improve the condition of greens and we required a powerful, but lightweight, tractor to operate the unit," said head greenkeeper Keith Chinery.



Ford's 3910 four-wheel drive tractor with turf tyres at work mole ploughing Dyrham Park fairways.

"The only lightweight tractor we found capable of handling the job was the Ford 1910."

With a lift capacity of 1½ tons, the 32hp 1910 Compact Tractor is powerful enough to lift and operate the Verti-drain and, when fitted with standard turf tyres, the overall ground pressure is reduced to a minimum. The optional creep speed gearbox was selected by Thorndon Park to provide additional control when operating the Verti-drain.

"The Verti-drain removes soil cores of ¾in in diameter and up to eight inches deep and, once removed, these are swept by using a brush fitted to a 16hp 1210 Ford Compact. This system takes less time, is less labour intensive and more effective than the previous system employed.

"With the versatility of the tractors, we are able to use the 1910 for gang mowers or a turf splitter at other times of the year, while the smaller 1210 is used for mole drainage on the fairways," Keith added.

Similar problems were encountered at the Dyrham Park Country Club, near Barnet, Hertfordshire, where surface water could be found on the fairways during the winter.

The course is situated entirely on clay soil, so a sub-soiler was purchased to improve drainage to a depth of 18in. With the very wet conditions, it was impossible to use the machine with an ordinary tractor without causing considerable damage to the turf.

"We looked at various tractors in the 40-50hp range and eventually selected a four-wheel drive, 47hp 3910 Ford, fitted with grassland tyres," course manager Bob Hornegold said.

"My initial reaction was that the tractor would be too big for the course, but I was amazed at what little effect it had on the turf. Previous tractors caused deep ruts.

"Since purchasing the 3910, we have been able to work with the sub-soiler even in very wet conditions. Drainage has been improved on the course, without the expense of employing outside contractors. The tractor can also be used for other tasks such as deep splitter and turf maintenance," Bob said.