The addition of a sandy top dressing dilutes thatch and increases its permeability.

49...ing the use of water and fertiliser to maintain grass growth but not force a lush sward. Scarification/verticutting also has an important part to play during the growing season to lightly flick through the turf, removing creeping growth and surface litter. A comb attachment for the mower is useful in this respect.

A more thorough verticutting treatment in early autumn, setting the blades to cut into the turf, can be beneficial, but may not resolve the problem alone. Hollow tine aeration in the autumn or spring is very helpful as this physically removes a small proportion of the unwanted fibrous material, which can be replaced with a more free-draining sandy top dressing - a type of soil exchange. It must, however, be appreciated that hollow tining using 12mm diameter tines at 50mm centres removes only 5% of the surface, which is a relatively small proportion and must therefore be continued over a number of years.

More recently, with the introduction of the Coremaster 12 fitted with quadra-tines, it may be possible with severe problems to hollow tine through the summer without undue surface disruption, this coupled with monthly top dressing. Hollow tining can also be used to relieve compaction or barriers near the surface, but for deeper seated drainage problems the use of sub-aerators such as the Verti-Drain or Twose Turf Conditioner is useful. Solid or slit tine aeration must also be carried out on a regular basis to relieve surface compaction and permit air into the soil to promote natural thatch breakdown and encourage deeper rooting.

The addition of a sandy top dressing dilutes thatch and increases its permeability, providing a more open texture which can be attacked by micro-organisms. Top dressing with a sandy soil is also believed to prolong the available nitrogen supply to the thatch layer, which in turn promotes more decomposition. The objectives are to intersperse sandy top dressing with the thatch to keep it open and promote natural breakdown - not just to bury it. Aeration through the winter helps with the 'mixing process', as well as promoting air circulation.

Where the thatch layer exists for several centimetres, such as on an old golf green, it may be possible to cut the turf thinly; cut and discard the layer of thatch, rake up the turf bed and replace the turf or, indeed, remove the turf and thatch in one go and either seed or turf. A drastic measure perhaps, but not to be dismissed in extreme circumstances. It should be realised, however, that unless the cause of the thatch is eliminated the thatch will merely tend to accumulate once again after the turf has been replaced. Conventional maintenance should be stepped up before such measures are considered.

The author, Andy Cole, until recently an advisory agronomist with the STRI, is now a lecturer in greenkeeping at the Warwickshire College of Agriculture.
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Send full CV to:
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Applications in writing with full CV and references should be sent to:

The Secretary
Helensburgh Golf Club
25 East Abercromby Street
Helensburgh
Dunbartonshire G84 9JD

THE GREENOCK GOLF CLUB

invite applications for the position of

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Full details of the post and of the club, together with an application form are available from:

The Secretary/Manager
Vicars Cross Golf Club Ltd
Tarvin Road, Great Barrow, Chester CH3 7HN
Telephone: (0244) 335174

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Salary negotiable according to qualifications and experience.

Please reply in the first instance enclosing CV and other relevant experience to:

S. Gidman
The Golf Design Partnership
10 Newland Mill
Winey, Oxon OX8 6HH

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Please reply in writing in the strictest confidence to:
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require a

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The Secretary, Alford Golf Club, Montgarie Road, Alford, Aberdeenshire AB3 8AE.

More Recruitment advertising on Page 50