Letters to the editor are always welcome. They should be signed and carry the writer’s address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity, libel and good taste. Please send letters to: The Editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL.

Green issues contained ■ New course was ‘great’ ■ Saw point...

■ We write concerning a green issue which has come to our attention over the last few years, that of the use of plastic containers for the storage of organic based foliar feeds. As an eighteen hole golf course, we use 90 or more of these 25 litre drums each year, which we think could be refilled and used again by the manufacturers. It is an environmentally sound practice to have to burn or dump the containers after use when they are perfectly capable of being used again.

■ We feel the sports turf industry should be setting standards for other industries to follow, for even our local council recycles plastic, glass, paper, etc. – and in this day and age even is from counts. We would welcome any comments from manufacturers, such as Far- mura, or any greenkeepers that have views as strong as our own on the subject of the environment.

Concerned Greenkeepers
West Sussex GC, Pulborough
• Greenkeeper International asked Farmura for their comments, which are published below:

As a company manufacturing environmental products we share the concerns expressed by West Sussex – clearly a different attitude towards packaging has to come.

For a number of years we have from time-to-time refilled customer’s drums and we were pleased to publicise and extend this service to other Clubs. I would stress at this stage that this is a refill service and not an exchange – a trace of the wrong contaminant could do serious damage.

Apart from the 25 litre containers a cost effective option is the 210 litre drum which, apart from being refilled, can be sold as a water butt – have you seen what they cost in garden centres? These can be refilled but physical handling considerations need to be taken into account. Finally, on-site refilling of 1,000 litre mini-bulk tanks is another option we could offer.

With co-operation, a great deal can therefore be done, and with drum allowances refilling can also be cost effective as well as environmentally friendly.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who is interested in discussing the above in more detail.

Jonathan Harmer
Managing Director, Farmura Environmental Products, Ashford, Kent

■ I was privileged to be part of a team of five who were the guinea pigs on the first one week pesticide spraying course at Aldwark Manor. As one of those guinea pigs I would just like to say ‘well done BIGGA’ – you have come up with an answer to a question not only was the course excellent but the results at the end of it were equally so, for we all came away having obtained our PA1 and PA2A certificates.

I would just like to say a special thank you to Jon Allbutt, our lecturer for the week, who made it so interesting and enjoyable. I would also like to thank all the lads on the course; because the high morale and the team work certainly gave me the confidence to obtain my certificates. I would certainly advise any greenkeeper who is un-certificated (and I’ll bet there’s a few out there) to go on this course.

What a week, well done BIGGA.

J Stewart Macintosh
Golf Club Beuerberg, Germany

■ I wish to congratulate all those involved in the National Education Conference at Cirencester: not only to the speakers, but...
I must put pen to paper to write and congratulate everyone involved for a most enjoyable and successful three days at the National Education Conference at Cirencester. One can only imagine all the hard work that was put in by everyone at headquarters.

The standard of speakers was excellent - both from home and abroad - with three people who I feel must be mentioned by name and beginning with Bernard Finlay for his excellent paper on his experiences at Portstewart GC - it was good to see one of our own up there - well done Bernard! Secondly, Mr Patrick O’Brien, Director, SE Region, Green Section USGA, - what can I say? Only that I will remember (and giggle over) his presentation for many years to come. Finally, Mr Jim Arthur, who I do not agree with on many things but at least one knows which direction Jim is coming: head-on with both guns blazing (and usually in my direction!).

ROBERT GIBERT
Head Greenkeeper, The Wisley GC, Surrey

An article in the April issue of Greenkeeper International by Hugh Tilley, entitled ‘Fertilisers’, appeared with the following statement: ‘Manganese, zinc, copper and iodine are all important at trace levels, and these and many other compounds, vitamins and amino acids are found in seaweed. Thus the inclusion of seaweed meal or extraction in fertilisers and foliar feeds is a useful addition.’

This statement is incorrect. Iodine is not an essential trace element for plants, nor are vitamins used by plants in any shape or form.

I would also like to state that the STRI does not recommend the addition of calcium and boron in fertilisers for turfgrasses, as there is no scientific evidence for the addition of these elements creating any benefit to turfgrass generally.

Dr Peter Hayes Director, Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley

* Greenkeeper International invited journalist Hugh Tilley to comment. This is his reply:

My information was obtained from several major manufacturers, backed by my own years as a professional grower of (agricultural) grasses. Theirs is the statement that iodine and vitamins (et alia) are essential for healthy plant growth.

The feature did not suggest that the STRI recommended calcium or boron, simply that there was an ‘indication’ (from a member of their own staff) that there could be a benefit, even a need, for these on sand based constructions and on areas of acidic sand.