The peak of fitness for sports and amenity turf.

Research has shown that by stimulating the microbes in the soil, significant improvement in growth and vigour of turf grass can be achieved.

Activate has been specially developed to provide the vital carbohydrates needed to maximise soil microbial activity, and provide increases in shoot and root growth.

Key benefits of Activate

• Contains simple sugars providing carbohydrates for microbial growth and stress tolerance.

• Contains plant growth hormones which are important in root development, general growth and recovery from stress.

• Contains soil penetrants to maximise uptake.

• Improves water holding capacity of the soil and drought tolerance.

• Contains a range of trace elements improving turf health.

• Improves seed germination and establishment.

For further information 0800 424 919

Rigby Taylor House, Garside Street, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 4AE Telephone: (01204) 394888 Facsimile: (01204) 385276

Activate is a trade mark of Rigby Taylor Ltd.
This month see the deadlines for entry to three BIGGA's major competitions. The T编 Award for Greenkeeping Excellence and Student Greenkeeper of the Year Competitions, which have an entry deadline of May 28, and the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and The Grass Roots Trading Company, which has an entry deadline of May 3.

Make sure that your entry is sent to BIGGA HQ by the closing date.

The T編 Award for Greenkeeping Excellence
The search to find the 1999 winner for the T编 Award for Greenkeeping Excellence is heating up. There is still time to nominate your choice, however, as entries need to be at BIGGA HQ by May 28, you need to make sure that your nomination is in the post today.

Does your head greenkeeper deserve to be recognised for his efforts? Does your club want to win a T編 3000 series triplex mower? Do you want to visit the GCSSA show in New Orleans and the T編 factories in Minneapolis and California in February 2000 for free? If the answer to any of the above is “yes” then fill in and return an official entry form or telephone Ken or Sami on 01347 833800. Remember, this competition is open to all Head Greenkeepers. Initial judging, to select up to eight finalists, will take place during June/July, by a panel of experienced, retired Head Greenkeepers, led by Walter Woods. The National Final will be held at BIGGA HOUSE on 24/25 October.

The BIGGA Golf Environment Competition
This year, 1999, sees the Grass Roots Trading Company, joining Amazone Ground Care and BIGGA in sponsoring the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition. Golf clubs throughout Great Britain are beginning to see the benefits of entering, which at the very least could give your club a detailed environmental survey and action plan. However, if you win then your club could receive the £5,000 first prize and the added bonus of being recognised as the top environmentally managed golf course.

Complete your application form today and send it to BIGGA HQ or contact Ken or Sami for further details.

The Learning Experience 2000
Planning is continuing for the Learning Experience 2000, which once again will be sponsored by Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products. With less than 270 days to the Learning Experience week, time is running out but there is still chance for you to have an input. Contact Sami or Ken at BIGGA HOUSE with your ideas.

The Y2k Problem
What is it? Does it affect me? What will it do? Watch out for more details next month.

The BIGGA Essay Competition 1999
Thanks to a suggestion by our Vice Chairman, Elliot Small, we are reintroducing an essay competition for greenkeepers. Full details of the competition will be published soon but briefly:

The overall theme will be “The Past, The Present and The Future” ie. to link with BTME 2000. The original essays from a competition run for greenkeepers between 1912 and 1915. The entries would be required to write an essay of between 2000 and 2500 words long ie. five to six typed pages.


Winners of each category would receive £500 with two runners up in each category receiving £100.

A brochure would be produced in 2000 of all the winning essays, together with a number of the essays from 1912 to 1915.

Get thinking and get sharpening your pencils ready to submit your essay before the Autumn.

Refund of Fees Scheme
The maximum refund that can be claimed in any one year has been increased to £250 from 29 March 1999. To be eligible, you must:

a. Be a member of BIGGA and have been a member for at least two years
b. Have paid your own fees and be able to provide proof of payment.
c. Have completed a course or component part of a course and be able to provide proof of completion.
d. Not have had the course subsidised by BIGGA.

e. Attend a relevant course to your job as a greenkeeper.

If you wish to claim then contact BIGGA HQ for an application form.
Successful Sheffield Seminar

On the 16 March 1999 the Sheffield Section of BIGGA held their first Seminar for over 20 years. It was a big success with over 100 people attending.

Our thanks go to our Trade Members who sponsored the day, namely, Arkens, Cheshire Turf Machinery, Course Care, Garbutts International Ltd, Glenside Organics, Irrigation Control, Mansfield Sand Company Ltd, Multi Core Aerator Ltd, Ocmis Irrigation UK Ltd, Purdy's Grass Machinery, Rigby Taylor Ltd and Sisis Equipment Ltd.

Also many thanks to our speakers David Golding, GTC, Bob Taylor, STRI, Ken Richardson, BIGGA, Tracey Middledon, BIGGA, John Coleman, Course Manager, Abbeydale Golf Club and Ian McPherson, Golf Course Construction.

Finally, our grateful thanks to Rotherham Golf Club for allowing us to use their Club for the day.

Ron Ullathrone
Sheffield Section Secretary

Keep smiling, Sandy

This is just a short note to reassure Sandy McDivot that not all greenkeepers have lost their sense of humour. It is blatantly obvious that the McDivot series of articles are somewhat tongue in cheek and therefore should be enjoyed as a piece of light relief.

Carry on the good work, Sandy. As for your critics, maybe a sense of humour bypass would be an option.

Michael Poole,
Assistant Head Greenkeeper
Nevill GC, Kent. (Via e-mail)

Environment action for Golf Courses

Golf clubs across Europe can now demonstrate their concern for the environment by signing up to participate in “Committed to Green” a campaign initiated by the European Golf Association Ecology Unit.

Following a meeting of Ecology Officers representing over 10 national golf federations, held at Vilamoura, Portugal, in February, details of the “Committed to Green” certification process have been finalised, and a common registration format agreed.

“Committed to Green” is a voluntary Environmental Management Programme, through which any European golf club is eligible to seek public recognition for demonstrating good environmental practice. The recognition process involves three stages of certification: Registration, Intermediate Recognition and Full Recognition.

The three levels of certification offer clubs an incentive to participate and then to follow the successive steps of the programme.

To register – clubs need to complete a registration form which gives a profile of the club and its environmental situation, and to provide a copy of the club’s environmental policy statement and a list of the members of the club’s “Committed to Green” Team.

As clubs progress to subsequent stages, they will address different environmental topics, including nature conservation, water resource management, integrated turfgrass management and aspects dealing with waste, energy efficiency, education and communications.

Full “Committed to Green” recognition will be based on a comprehensive Environmental Management Programme, in which the candidate clubs clearly demonstrate significant environmental achievements.

This is a long-term process, normally taking at least three years to complete. Successful clubs will also be expected to sustain their commitment.

“The award of the ‘Committed to Green’ label will be a valuable form of recognition, both for golf clubs and eventually for other sport and recreation facilities,” said David Stubbs, Executive Director of the EGA Ecology Unit.

“All fields of activity are these days having to address environmental questions, and it is good that golf is taking a positive lead on this subject. The example set by golf should have wide applications throughout the sport sector.”

Since its launch in late 1997, the “Committed to Green” programme has attracted widespread interest throughout the golf community, and from leading environmental organisations. The initiative has been welcomed by the European Commission, United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wide Fund for Nature.
Whatever the job, Iseki has the Power of the Team

Iseki have a comprehensive range of compact tractors with the muscle and manoeuvrability to take on any task. From greenhouse to golf course, nurseries, stables, parks and gardens, Iseki products offer economy, efficiency and long life, plus a variety of accessory options designed for the job in hand. Iseki products are available from the Textron UK dealer network offering: the Power of the Team for sales, demonstrations, service and spares.

For more information on ISEKI products phone 0500 026208
Jim Arthur looks back to when he started his career and shows that the advice he gave then is just as relevant now...

Throughout more than 50 years of golf course advisory work I have steadfastly followed the principles impressed on me at the start of my advisory career by three remarkable people, of whom more anon. They taught me the time-proven and indisputable facts on which the basic principles of greenkeeping have depended since time immemorial. These principles have not altered simply because they are based on the needs of the fine textured 'turf' grasses - fine fescues and bent (Agrostis) - and these needs like the grasses have never changed. One sees so many passing fashions, hailed as the newest and best ideas, and none last more than a decade, and when they do conspicuously fail, their advocates have already shamelessly switched to the latest gimmick. The most important basis of my advice is and always has been - keep it simple and understandable. Greenkeeping is more of an art than a science. Soil chemists, physicists, mycologists, soil analysts (particularly them!) and all the other 'ists' are there to support, not to promote unproven policies. Their worst crime is correct observation, wrong deduction. The work of the commercial element of sports turf management is not to be designated providing it is confined to real improvements. Sadly, especially in the case of fertilisers, at times the motivation seems to be to try to create new markets by over-selling. I have maintained for more years than I care to remember, that golf clubs should buy very little fertiliser (and then nitrogen-only). Furthermore, clubs should order only what they need and should resist being pressurised into excessive purchasing.

Yet we still see case after case of gross over-feeding with inorganic fertilisers - fine turf not colour and traditional greenkeeping as well as giving better playing surfaces is so much cheaper!

To return to my mentors, my introduction to grasses was in 1938 when my professor, a doughty Scot and a golfer of course, while concentrating on agricultural grasses, explained that all the rest were still worth studying, as quite apart from being valued constituents of golf course turf, they were very useful indicators of soil fertility, or the reverse - even if farmers did regard them as weeds! He started my enthusiasm for grasses, which is still with me. Then came five years in the Army and my close contact with turf on occasions had nothing to do with studying botany but everything to do with survival!

The philosophies taught me by two remarkable men when I joined 'the Research Station' at Bingley just after the war are simple, indisputable and unchanging. I do not understand why I am regarded as "invariably controversial", though Sir Michael Bonallack kindly qualifies this comment in his preface to Practical Greenkeeping adding "but infuriatingly nearly always right".

If you are presented with techno-babble, demand that the perpetrator explains in simple terms - nine out of ten cannot.
After all I am merely echoing the tenets of sound traditional greenkeeping which were old fashioned when I was first taught them 53 years ago. My mentor was Richard Libbey, the senior advisor, who was a botanist of international renown. When I was first appointed, their Director gave me three pieces of advice: First, my pre-war agricultural degree was useless and I had to reverse everything I had been taught on the principle of "ask a farmer what to do and go and do the opposite". Secondly, I was told to stick to grass and avoid architecture as "I would never be a good enough golfer to rank with the best and my agronomic advice could be compromised". Thirdly, (and even on a short acquaintance he realised it would be a severe hardship), I was to go round for the first year being trained by Richard and I was to keep my mouth shut and my ears open.

Long advisory tours with Richard gave me a wonderful education - peering, probing and digging into turf knowledge of many acknowledged experts in their specialised work.

Alternatively send for a 28-page folder of relevant articles and references which can be obtained (as can the book) from BIGGA HOUSE, for the princely sum of £2.50 to cover postage.

The basic principles of traditional greenkeeping hinge on copying the conditions in those areas where bents and fescues naturally dominate the turf.

Such areas are so diverse and seem to have nothing in common, yet there must be common factors. Clearly it is nothing to do with acidity or alkalinity as the same grasses thrive equally on acid moors and heathland as on alkaline dunes and downland. It is nothing to do with soil types which range from extremely sandy links and heaths, to heavy clays of old parkland and neglected pastures. It is nothing to do with soil moisture; there can hardly be a greater contrast between tidally flooded meadows and arid sandy links, yet the same species occur on both.

A little 'research' shows that the common factors are very low 'chemical' fertility coupled with free drainage and related absence of compaction, encouraging deep rooting species which are also our finest textured grasses.

After these conditions, deliberately or accidentally, by compaction or fertiliser treatment, and the grasses we want are penalised and in come our old enemy, Poa annua. In brief, the two main causes of its invasion or accidentally, by compaction or fertiliser treatment, and the grasses we want are penalised and in come our old enemy, Poa annua. In brief, the two main causes of its invasion
The two main causes of Poa Annua invasion and dominance are inadequate or too shallow aeration and above all phosphatic fertilisers.

best traditional courses - very sparingly!

Even before the 1914-18 war, Poa annua was synonymous with poorer turf in the eyes of greenkeepers and research scientists alike (Dr. Murray 1913). Today, however, there are too many voices which excuse or even praise this enemy Number One - either claiming it is inevitable, or because, as with Tour Professionals, they never play in this country when Poa is at its worst - and get presented with tarted-up putting surfaces for their big day - and never see or care what happens to those greens a few months (or weeks) later.

Let there be no question - annual meadow grass is the source of 90% of all greenkeeping problems and is an extremely expensive grass to maintain, and is tolerable only in the peak growing periods when its rapid recovery from damage and in response to fertilisers and water make it possible to produce good if slow putting conditions - for six to seven months a year.

The grasses which produce (on much smaller budgets) good conditions all year round for golf are the bent s and fescues. Therefore we need to know how to encourage them. Many greenkeepers over the years have succeeded. It is therefore depressing to hear speakers at seminars either extolling its virtues or saying Poa dominance is inevitable. It is reprehensible because this unquestionably is confusing to younger greenkeepers, plagued as they are by unqualified salesmen some of whom, if told the truth, would conveniently forget it to make a sale.

Equally depressing is the number of greenkeepers at all levels who maintain that however wrong they may be, their members (new golfers) have to be given the nice and green lush turf that attracted them to golf in the first place the Augusta syndrome. Such heretics forget that golf is an all year round game (Augusta is open perhaps four and a half months a year). Our courses also have to stand up to heavy play and picture-postcard Augusta is probably the most underplayed course in the world. Finally, the budget to produce such visual delights is enormous, with money, manpower, machinery and materials wildly beyond the means of 99.9% of U.K. courses.

Once you start on the slippery slope, one cost leads to another. Excessive fertilisers lead to increasingly ineffective and hugely expensive fungicidal treatments. Our best courses use minuscule amounts of nitrogenous fertiliser and virtually no fungicides.

Above all else, we must combat the insidious dual evils of misplaced commercialism and apathy. Those who care for traditional standards tight lies; plenty of run on the ball; firm, fast greens - and abhor target golf, must put their heads above the parapet. Do not be afraid of being criticised; your reward will come, though perhaps not in this world.

Stand up and be counted and join the swelling ranks - both side of the Atlantic - for the 'bump and run game' and counter the ranks of misplaced commercialism - even those most eloquent in favour of feeding have not the slightest idea that they are completely wrong.

Do not let dodgy speakers get away with misrepresentation, whether caused by ignorance or cupidity. Stand up and argue your case: Demand more audience participation time in seminars. Good speakers on sound ground welcome such interventions - at least it shows that their audiences have not been put to sleep. Remember the speakers' adage; "Repartee needs to be rehearsed!"

Fight for our traditions and rout the target golf, summer-only school.

If you are presented with technobabble, demand that the perpetrator explains in simple terms - nine out of ten cannot. Do not spare the miscreants!
Practical Golf Course Maintenance

THE MAGIC of Greenkeeping

By Gordon Witteveen and Michael Bavier

I was very fortunate to attend a one day seminar in 1997 called "The Magic Of Greenkeeping" Gordon & Michael gave. An insightful & candid portrayal of what ingredients make a successful superintendent, delivered with great verve & panache in a Morcombe & Wise style of humour ensuring those attending did not nod off in the process. I can think of no greater achievement for any person who has dedicated their life to one profession than to communicate their wealth of experience through the publishing of a book. What is a surprise is the fact that they dedicate this book to their Green Chairman. This in itself speaks volumes of where their personal success lies, not just in sound agronomy but in communication with those golfers on the front line.

Through careful nurturing of their contact with club members they gained genuine support, trust & respect for their knowledge in the art of greenkeeping. We all thrive in our positions when we are a valued member of the team which Gordon and Michael certainly achieved. This book goes into detail about all aspects of turf management which, professionally integrated, will lead to success in this business of golf.

Its general aim is to give renewed vigour and enthusiasm for a profession which has countless pitfalls for those who do not tread carefully. After the last two winters we have endured we can all do with an intellectual "pick me up". They cover the rudimentary elements of greenkeeping, making this book a sort of Lonely Planet guide for greenkeepers, espousing what budding or experienced greenkeepers really need to know.

The emphasis on practical matters in turf management is excellent. Any greenkeeper will find something useful within these pages. Practical experience is only gained through hard, dedicated work. It takes several years to accrue such skills. The best of these is the "sixth sense" which prods the mind into seeing some form of action is required for the greenkeeping matter at hand. This book goes a long way to exposing the important facets which over time help to form this sixth sense. The many common sense ideas will be most interesting to those greenkeepers or students with limited experience. Items covered are clear, concise & of great benefit to younger greenkeepers or students with limited experience. This book goes into detail about all aspects of turf management which, professionally integrated, will lead to success in this business of golf.
Keeping turf in good condition can be more demanding than the toughest course. Scotts is here to help, with one of the widest range of turf care products on the market. For regular feeding of fine turf look no further than Greenmaster®. With ten granular and five liquid formulations to choose from you can exactly match your sward's requirement whether it be for a balanced feed, a high K product, added trace elements or a special tonic.

Slow and controlled release nutrition is available from the Sierra range. Sierraform® slow release fertilizer comes in six different analyses and is particularly suitable for sand-based greens whilst Sierrablen® controlled release fertilizer is the ideal choice to save you time and work as one application will feed your turf all season. For more information about these fertilizers or any other Scotts products talk to your local Area Sales Manager or call 01473 830492.

The Scotts Company is the leader in research, manufacturing and marketing of products for professional turf care, ornamental horticulture, field and vegetable production and domestic use. From bases in the U.S.A. and Europe, Scotts sells its products in more than 50 countries worldwide.


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New moisture meter from Dynamax

Dynamax Inc, of Texas, USA, has launched the TH20 Theta Moisture Meter, to measure volumetric soil moisture content. It combines ease of use and accuracy with low cost, to give access to precise soil moisture data.

The probe is reliable, even in saline soils, and its compact size means minimal soil disturbance.

The sensor sends microwave signals and amplifies a reflected signal dependent on the dielectric constant (theta), a precise electronic parameter for the volume of water in soil (plus or minus 2% accuracy).

TH20 is simple to use: the probe is inserted into the soil and when pushing the button then the LCD shows the volume of water in soil as a decimal value.

For further information Tel: 001 281 564 5100

Greens Groomer sweeps up

The new Greensward Engineering 6' wide Greens Groomer attachment quickly fits behind almost any power unit and will handle a wide range of greens maintenance tasks.

It can be used for regular brushing and grooming to stand up the grass before mowing and to control grain, and is also exceptionally effective for raking in topdressing due to its patented multi brush design which moves the sand three ways to gently rub it in and fill aeration holes without scuffing or bruising the turf.

It can even be fitted directly behind a truck weathered topdresser to apply and rub in topdressing in a single pass.

A 17' wide triple gang version is ideal for brushing fairways to remove worm casts and dew for improved early morning play.

For further information Tel: 0113 267 6000.