

DIY top dressings much cheaper

REGULAR and even top dressing is considered by many greenkeepers and groundsmen to be one of the most important factors in promoting and maintaining fine turf surfaces in optimum condition.

With the help of Royer soil processing equipment, supplied by UK distributor, Huxleys Grass Machinery, Stewart McMillan, head greenkeeper at Leatherhead Golf Club in Surrey and his team of four assistants produce all of the top dressings used on the course. So, instead of paying for ready-prepared material at a cost in excess of £30 a tonne, the club is able to buy-in their own raw materials at one-third, or less, of that price and make their own dressing in the quantities and at a time to suit course requirements and workloads.

Little and often has been the key to the success of the top dressing applications to the greens at Leatherhead Golf Club, explained Mr McMillan.

The old-fashioned method had been to put on heavy dressings just a few times a year. Now, by applying the mix in small quantities at much greater frequency, the greens respond to the treatment much faster and the disturbance to golfers is minimal, with all greens playable again in just a few hours.

Application rates are varied to suit the specific requirements of the surfaces and the season, with approximately 120 tonnes in total applied as a top dressing during a year. Extra is prepared for course repairs and tee rebuilding, with all preparation taking place during quieter periods or poor weather.

Mr McMillan explained that he purchases both fine sand and loam in bulk from local sources ready for processing by his Royer equipment.

Provided the bought-in soil is absolutely dry, the first step



Bulk mixed soil and sand is loaded into the Royer 112. The shredder mixes, cleans and aerates the material before 'firing' it into a trailer ready for spreading. The club also uses a Royer Model 30 Powerscreen when grading or pre-cleaning is required.

is to pass all the soil through the club's Royer Model 30 powerscreen. This machine comprises a vibrating screen (1/4in mesh size) mounted above an elevator-conveyor which simultaneously sieves the soil, removing unwanted and oversize material, before carrying the graded soil away to the storage area.

Having produced a clean, evenly-sized product, the sand and soil are then bulk mixed together at the required ratio before being put through the Royer 112 soil shredder. This machine mixes, cleans and aerates the soil and sand by the continuous raking and tumbling action produced by its high-speed revolving inclined cleated belt.

Processed material is ejected from the Royer shredder beneath spring-loaded steel fingers at the top of the belt

while oversize and unwanted product tumbles back for further processing or rejection at the foot of the shredder.

In the case of Leatherhead Golf Club, the processed sand and soil mix is discharged directly into a trailer ready for loading into the top dressing spreader.

Mr McMillan said that the Royer equipment not only helped to reduce the cost of obtaining good, clean and consistent top dressings, but it allowed him to produce the material that he wants, when he want.

"It's not too labour intensive either" said Mr McMillan. "If necessary, all top dressing production could be carried out by one man. Provided the basic materials are dry, we can put up to 20 cubic yards through the machines in a couple of hours".