

# STOP THE SILLINESS!

GREENKEEPING problems seem to crop up on a regular pattern, some seasonal and some topical, judging by my telephone calls. The commonest chronic worry from now on until spring is the concern, to put it mildly, about moss on greens. This always seems to be raised by the keen lawn owner – and if there is one man I dread (much more than farmers who can be educated), it is the lawn owner who extols lush green turf and wants the greens on his course to look like his lawn. It is pointless telling him that his lawn would soon look a sorry mess if it had to withstand the amount of traffic to which the normal green is subjected.

**By Jim Arthur**

Concern that moss will kill the grass is baseless. There is an old greenkeeping adage to the effect that if greens do not show a little moss in winter, then they will inevitably be too lush and soft all summer. Naturally, as soil 'fertility' drops off in winter with the cessation of micro-organism activity in the soil as temperatures drop, that critical level which suits the finer grasses, but is too low for the unsuitable ones to survive, may drop temporarily to a level only just enough for the better grasses and moss can then invade.

Needless to say, such invasion is worst where there is least traffic, e.g. on the backs of greens and the areas furthest from the next tee, and also on ridges that are penalised by closer mowing, etc. One dodge to get rid of moss in the old days was to cut the hole in the middle of a mossy area – it very soon disappeared!

As 'fertility' rises naturally in the spring, the moss will go equally naturally, though it can be speeded on its way by the application of a light ammonia and iron dressing in March. Try and kill it off with (expensive) moss killers in the autumn and inevitably we are left with bare areas that can only recolonise with more moss.

In the growing season, savage attacks against moss all too often merely result in the scars recolonising with annual meadow grass. Moss will never kill grass in the accepted sense of the term. It is easily controlled by creating conditions that suit the finer grasses and less so the moss, but great care is needed not to overdo the 'improvement' which would replace moss with annual meadow grass.

A great deal of unnecessary worry could be avoided if a little moss were accepted as normal and a good sign that soil conditions are about right. It also needs stating that very little moss is caused by bad drainage or by compaction – as these have to be so marked that other problems loom first and demand correction. Nothing exasperates me more than the worried committee man who goes on and on about the moss, but admits that the greens are putting perfectly. Yet they never see annual

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