

What do the 'Dances With Wolves' film set, the River Plate Stadium in Buenos Aires and the Weston Hills Country Club golf course in Florida, home of the Honda Classic, have in common? They all use Green Lawngr turf paint.

Turf paints, of course, are not new to the turf industry. Recently, however, improvements in the quality, durability and economics have made turf paint use more consistent and reliable. And with golf club members, influenced by the lush courses they see on TV, demanding a uniform green colour all year, despite our climate, more and more greenkeepers have started looking at turf paint to keep golfers quiet. Turf paints can also be used to cover up scars caused by oil and fuel spillages, disease, drought or heavy use.

Agronomically, turf paints are not harmful to the turf (unlike ordinary paint which has additives that can destroy grass). Turf paints are specially developed coloured latex coatings, with the better brands formulated to allow water and air to pass freely through the colour coating and not affect the turf vigour. A superior turf paint will also bond onto the grass itself and not wear or rub off onto clothing or skin, even when used on a high traffic area.

MAKING YOUR

Green Lawngr, made in the United States by Becker-Underwood, is the brand leader in this area. Many greenkeepers are also adding it to their divot mix since unrepaired divots can detract from well maintained turf.

This product is one of the diverse range of products distributed in the UK by Reading-based Amenity Technology, a new golden key member of BIGGA's Education and Development Fund.

"Painting turf will never be an alternative to good horticultural management and fertility programmes," says Carl Crome, Amenity Technology's managing director. "However, in certain sit-

uations when green turf is a must and difficult to achieve, a high quality turf paint is a solution which must be considered."

Adapted for Europe

Amenity Technology was set up in 1993 by Crome, ex-Rigby Taylor, EnviroGreen and Maxwell Hart. His aim was simple: to make available to British and European greenkeepers products that weren't already available to them as they strived to enhance the appearance of their courses and improve playing surfaces. He would do this by (a) importing some of the best products from places like the United States, Canada and Sweden and (b) by

having 'European versions' of other useful products manufactured here.

As well as making greens greener, Amenity Technology can also make water bluer. Amenity Technology is also distributing Becker-Underwood's Lake Colourant Water Soluble Packets, a highly concentrated blend of dry-flowable colourants that have undergone strict environmental testing at an independent laboratory. The water can still be used for other purposes such as irrigation without discolouring turf, concrete or other surfaces.

Another Becker-Underwood product that is also available in convenient water soluble packets is Define, a drift control adjuvant designed to keep fertiliser and pesticide sprays "on the mark". Define was developed in the USA to help reduce spray drift while crop-spraying from planes, an activity which has been outlawed in the UK. But if it can help prevent chemical trespass when it's being used by aerial equipment, it

Amenity Technology is always being asked by companies around the world to take on new products. But Carl says they probably take on only about 10% of these products because many of the ones they're offered are not right for the industry, they are too close to what is already available or they are totally unsuitable for European courses. However, he stresses he is always on the lookout for new products or ideas for new products.

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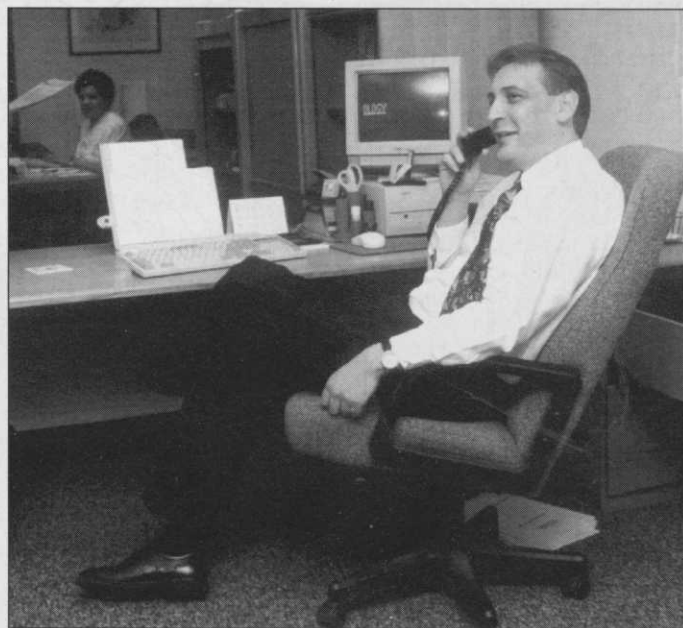
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Amenity Technology's Carl Crome: "I see the management of golf courses becoming more professional"

should work even more effectively on the ground. It works by standardising the droplet size.

An example of a UK product being distributed by Amenity Technology is Turfex Traditional, which is being relaunched at BTME this month. Manufactured and developed by Service Chemicals, the Daventry-based company behind Turfex, this concentrated wetting and penetrating agent has been specially formulated for use on all types of turfgrass suffering from dry patch, drought stress, compaction and surface flooding.

To complement this product, Amenity Technology, which operates through a network of well-known local dealers, has Go Green which combines all the benefits of concentrated liquid iron for green-up with a wetting agent. Another complementary product is the Spraywet wetting agent tablets, with each 250 gram tablet capable of treating 6-7 average size greens with a normal water pressure of 60-90 psi.

A new Service Chemicals product is Sward, a blend of polyalkoxylate surfactants for use with selective herbicides, mosskillers, fungicides, earthworm control products, insecticides and growth retardants. Whilst adjuvants (materials which may be tank mixed with pesticides to improve performance but have no pesticidal activity themselves) have been available in agriculture for many years, these materials are new to the amenity turfgrass market.

From Sweden, Amenity Technology is bringing the Hio hole-cutter. "It's three times as expensive as the cheapest holecutter on the market but it will last five times as long," claims Crome. "And it now comes with an

unconditional offer of a guarantee against manufacturer's defects. That means that if a greenkeeper breaks his Hio (excluding shell blade), all they have to do is phone us with the part number and we will dispatch a replacement part to them free of charge." He also says it cuts holes in seconds, not minutes, because the hammer and single shell are incorporated in one and you don't need additional tools, such as mallets.

'I see greenkeepers having offices instead of sheds'

From Canada, Amenity Technology brings the Bayco range of golf course accessories. These include ball washers, flags, rakes, ball retrievers, tee markers and signs.

Other products on their books include Scuttle, a non-hazardous rabbit and deer repellent suitable for protecting turf and trees, the US Golf Hole Target ("which is ideal for putting greens as it prevents erosion and desiccation of the soil around the top of the hole") and the DTC-3 Spray Tank Cleaner which has been specially formulated for pesticide spray tanks.

"These products do not just make the greenkeeper's life easier, they enable him to maintain the course to a high standard as levels of play increase towards the year 2000. In fact, the need for half the products greenkeepers currently use – eg the expensive use of fungicides – and most of the products we sell, is a direct result of the increase in the amount of play on courses. The grasses now are under much more stress than

when I entered this industry 18 years ago. So there is far more need now for more unique products, such as turf paint because grass has been damaged under stress or vandalised," says 38-year-old Crome.

"The greenkeeper is under a lot more pressure to maintain a surface with a lot less available time to do the job. Therefore there is a need for these kind of products to be used to enhance courses. Also, greenkeepers are under more pressure to present a course well as the appearance of the course is becoming as important as the playing surfaces."

The future today

Amenity Technology markets these products under the slogan "The Future Today", so we asked Carl how he sees the future of greenkeeping.

"I see greenkeeping becoming more and more of a profession. I see the management of golf courses becoming more professional with greenkeepers given realistic budgets and using computers as much as greens machines. I see greenkeepers having offices instead of sheds, and becoming as highly regarded as course superintendents in the United States. I see education levels going up and as these go up the professionalism of the whole industry will increase. I also see more and more specialist products for solving one problem rather than one product that solves everything."

He also sees the use of pesticides being severely restricted over the next decade. "The products we distribute strengthen the grass against the problems which require pesticides to solve them, such as Go Green which will give

an effective degree of preventive control against fungus attack or Turfex Traditional which assists dew dispersal, thus restricting disease development."

Amenity Technology will be launching many of these products – eg Sward, Turfex Traditional plus a new drencher gun and a new liquid fertiliser, Pro Tein – at this month's BTME in Harrogate. Carl believes the future of trade shows lies with BIGGA and the Institute of Groundsmanship, which organises Saltex at Windsor. And he is convinced one 'umbrella' show organised by an outside company, such as P&O Events, would be a mistake. "The idea of having the BTME in Harrogate in January coupled with Saltex in Windsor in September is perfect, covering the north and south of the country. There is no need to have an additional show in London. Also, I don't see why people outside the industry should benefit. Any profits that are obtained by the show organisers should be put back into the industry for the education of greenkeepers and groundsmen – as BIGGA and the IoG do."

Amenity Technology's support for the Association extends beyond exhibiting at Harrogate and advertising in *Greenkeeper International*. After only two years of trading, it has given £3,000 to BIGGA's Education and Development Fund.

Explaining why he did this, Carl said: "We believe in supporting and educating greenkeepers for the future because as the products we are introducing to the marketplace become more technically advanced the greenkeeper will need to be better educated to maximise the use and the advantages of these new products."