

Fensoil 1

With reference to the article "Hey Big Spender" in the September issue.

It is somewhat surprising to read that the personal opinions of someone should be expressed in dogmatic terms, especially in criticising something which is so widely used with great success on so many courses and in new constructions.

Perhaps one should not blame Mr Clement but statements that Forest of Arden "bunkers became swimming pools when the irrigation was on" indicates to any greenkeeper that gross overwatering was practised.

Perhaps it was this that caused the greens "not to take heavy play". Certainly it is common knowledge, firstly, that management banned routine aeration between spring and autumn to avoid upsetting the guests and secondly that the current top dressing is "pure" sand - and any greenkeeper worth his salt knows what this does eventually in terms of root breaks.

In no way can sand-only top dressing meet Mr Clement's statement about "being duty bound to top dress with the same material that the greens were built with in the first place". The root zone was in fact fen soil and an approved sand.

It should be made clear that top dressings based on fen soil and approved sand (or with fen dress premixed from the same top quality basic materials) is the choice of most of our best greenkeepers - and also is the material used on most of our championship courses as well as literally hundreds of others.

Alternatives with sphagnum peat (often with too fine a sand) are not only ecologically unacceptable, but the peat separates out after rain or irrigation - leaving black 'ripples' over putting surfaces, with the sand left behind.

May I stress that I have absolutely no interest, save technical and academic ones, in any top dressing - but Banks (father and son) and I "discovered" fen soil and fen peat and promoted its use well over 30 years ago and I have advised its use ever since - with invariably excellent results, provided all other management was equally correct.

J H Arthur,
 Agronomist
 Budleigh Salterton,
 Devon

Short changed?

The Association has recently contacted me, asking my club to donate to the Building Fund for the new headquarters. This, I am sure, is a noble and worthy cause, after all, the growth and prosperity of the Association is something which all in the industry should welcome.

On the subject of noble and worthy we at Laleham are having a fund raising day for SCOPE (a real charity, Mr Thomas). As luck would have it I attended a meeting with the charity at about the same time as I was deciding whether to ask the club to support the Building Fund.

Surely BIGGA could spare us a few quid for such a worthy cause. After all, the rumours that Lee Hurst was paid a princely sum by

the Association does suggest that we (yes, that was ~~we~~ Mr Thomas), are rather flush with cash at the moment. Confident in the Association's generosity I suggested that we ask BIGGA to donate to the charity.

Apparently not! You have refused to donate even a token amount to a charity that is truly in need of funding. That's fine Mr Thomas, you save BIGGA funds for new offices and third rate comedians (as well as the fourth rate singer WOW).

Laleham golf course shall concentrate its limited funds on projects of true worth.

Finally looking down the list of contributing clubs proudly published in the magazine, I see two

that I know of where the club does not encourage BIGGA membership by paying their staff's subscriptions, (unlike Laleham where all the greenstaff have their membership paid). One of these clubs, whom you have taken money from does not even pay for greenstaff to attend college. Strange way of supporting the profession that. Unlike Laleham where we encourage all staff to attend college, and pay them to do so. Funny how people's principles will shift at the prospect of some publicity, don't you think?

On that subject how about publishing this letter?

John Ross, Course Manager
 Laleham GC, Chertsey, Surrey

Fensoil 2

For over 30 years now my company has been involved with the supply and marketing of Fensoil. It is therefore with some dismay and extreme annoyance that I read the article about Steve Clement in the September issue of your magazine - "Hey Big Spender" - which referred to Fensoil as being a "smeary wet material that doesn't take heavy play when wet, so we have moved away from fen soil".

Banks Amenity Products Ltd pioneered the use of Fensoil during the 1960s and is now a major supplier, so much so that it has its own high quality resources specifically supplying Fensoil for incorporating into Rootzones and Topdressings (particularly Fendress (TM) for golf greens and tees).

Our track record in supplying Fensoil for Rootzone materials is without question the most impres-

sive of any company in this business today. We have supplied Fensoil for the construction of over 170 new courses and countless individual greens - too numerous to mention. In addition, Fensoil is used in the manufacture of our Fendress (TM) topdressing which is recognised nationally as one of the top two leading brands.

I am extremely surprised that the Editor of Greenkeeper International should publish an opinion which publicly pillories a product and which is something I have not seen previously. The opinion in this article is not based on fact and is totally without foundation and as a major supplier of this product we take great exception to this article.

T.J. Banks, Managing Director
 Banks Amenity Products Ltd
 Market Harborough, Leics

Fensoil 3

My offer to show Steve Clement many examples of first class greens built and top dressed with fen soil, backed up by sound management, fell on deaf ears. Had he accepted, his contention that greens topdressed using fen soil "will not take heavy play when wet" would have been blown to smithereens.

It would be interesting to know the name of the author in question. Anonymous pieces never carry the same weight.

Donald Steel, Donald Steel and Company Ltd, Chichester, West Sussex

Editor's note: The article in question was written by Greenkeeper International Editor, Scott MacCallum, following a comprehensive and wide-ranging interview with Steve Clement.

The grass isn't always greener

Making a new green for an experienced greenkeeper should be a very simple matter. Select the site for the new green, improve the drainage if necessary, take the top off and rotovate, you can then add extra soil, sand etc and then get the levels right. The beauty of all soil greens is the fact that all the nutrients required to grow grass are naturally there. Add to these occasionally and you have a green for life.

I cannot understand why so many clubs change their established greens for these new American type greens where the soil content is almost nil.

To make grass grow on these kinds of

surfaces requires lots of fertilisers added at regular intervals. To stop them drying out a regular supply of water is also required.

With the drainage being so good, leaching must take place ensuring that a high percentage of the expensive fertilisers will find its way very quickly into the drains from where it goes into the stream or pond or even nearby lake. Times this by 18 or even more greens and I think you must agree the amount of fertiliser finding its way into the waterways is frightening.

Our organisation, BIGGA, is rightfully proud of our commitment to pro-

tect the environment and the question must be asked, has enough thought gone into what we are doing? Or has keeping up with the Jones's (Americans) once again over-ridden all else, including common sense.

FL. Fletcher, Chapel-en-le-Firth GC, Derbyshire

PS. Last month's letter from Jim Arthur was another reminder of old ideas being the best. The simple method of reducing the pH levels of the soil with sulphur is more than adequate to remove the problem of worms without the use of expensive chemical.