

TALKING

Six of the country's top men give their views on feeding regimes

Feeding Regimes

Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE



Name: John Crawford
Club: Stirling GC
Region: Scotland
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus four, one apprentice and two skill seekers



Name: Richard Gamble
Club: Aldwark Manor Hotel Golf and Country Club
Region: Northern
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus four, plus gardener



Name: Ian Needham
Club: Beedles Lakes, Leicester
Region: Midland
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus four



Name: Lee Strutt MG
Club: Richmond GC, Surrey
Region: South East
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Course Manager, plus five, plus two part-time



Name: Jeff Mills
Club: Taunton and Pickeridge, Somerset
Region: South West and South Wales
Course Type: Hilltop (Limestone base)
Staff: Course Manager, plus four



Name: Patrick Devine
Club: Carrickfergus GC
Region: Northern Ireland
Course Type: Parkland (18 holes)
Staff: Head Greenkeeper plus four

1. Do you plan your feeding programme well in advance or wait to assess weather and ground conditions?

1. I always plan a couple of months in advance and then, of course, have to see what the weather and ground conditions bring along

1. I plan a feeding programme two or three months before the growing season after consultation with our agronomist and then, of course, keep an eye on the weather and ground conditions.

1. I wait to assess weather and ground conditions before deciding on a feeding programme. We have very dry conditions and never come off the greens.

1. I plan three or four months ahead, but then it depends on the weather and time of the year. Last year's regime and soil analysis, which we do each year, is also taken into consideration.

1. I have a rough idea and then I always work according to the weather. Nothing is set in concrete.

1. I plan ahead and then take into account weather and ground conditions.

HEADS

2. Can you explain your philosophy with regard to feeding?

3. Does your course lend itself to an across the board approach or do you require different policies for different areas?

4. Are you considering a more organic approach to your feeding programmes or if you have already done so what led you to doing so?

5. Can you foresee any major changes affecting your feeding policies over the next five years?

2. I am a big believer in the "little and often" theory. We get a lot of rain so fertilisers leech through quickly at times and so we have to put a bit more on.

3. We need a different policy programme as we have one pure sand green, two USGA greens and 15 of the traditional soil base which were constructed nearly 150 years ago.

4. A more organic approach may be on the way though it depends on environmental issues. We haven't gone down that road so far, but I have tried seaweed and had encouraging results with it.

5. Not really. Much will depend on government legislation. If they decide on a more organic approach then we will need to change. If they don't then things may continue much as they are today.

2. Peaks and troughs sum it up. I like a good kick start at the beginning of the growing season and then basically follow a "little and often" theory. I like to tickle things up every five to six weeks.

3. We have a different policy for two of our greens, the 13th and 18th with a little more fertiliser. I fertilise the other 16 greens four or five times a year and half the fairways once a year. The other half are near the river and they grown very well without fertilisers.

4. Yes. We are more aware these days of the need for a more organic programme, but I have to say we get good results with ordinary granular fertilisers and have done over the years.

5. I can't foresee any major changes. I always keep an eye on new products coming on the market and many clubs have changed to liquid organic fertilisers. I have tried them but haven't been impressed to be frank and so stick to tried and tested methods.

2. We feed as and when required. Our greens are very unusual in that they are built on probase (graded ash) which comes from power stations near Gainsborough. We cut at five mil throughout the year and the greens are never wet.

3. All the greens get the same treatment. We feed fairways once a year with 20-10-10 and tees and surrounds twice a year.

4. We are not considering a more organic approach. I have tried organic fertilisers but they don't seem to work, although I don't know why. We stick to the traditional fertilisers.

5. No. We get the best response from granular fertilisers. I have tried liquids, but they don't work very well.

2. In a nutshell we feed little and often. The regime is geared to plant recovery following competitions when there may be more wear and tear. If there is we obviously give it some feed.

3. Across the board, although soil analysis identifies weak areas and so we can re-adjust if needs be. We have a baseline and then touch up if necessary.

4. Not bothered if it is organic or inorganic because it makes little difference. We have used a product for the last two years and achieved good results. I have used both and am not biased one way or the other.

5. Not really. In the last five years I have reduced the feeding programme for the first three years considerably and then had a minimum feed for the last two. I don't see any major changes, apart from seasonal differences.

2. As little as possible and just enough to keep a full cover. I use only 45 kilos of fertiliser for the 18 greens (approx one hectare).

3. Different policies for different areas. I feed greens and tees a little, but I want to keep natural bents so don't feed fairways at all.

4. I have been organically based since I started greenkeeping 28 years ago with seaweed and hoof and horn products for example. I have used some slow release fertilisers on tees.

5. No. It is not necessary to change, but I must add that I am always looking at new products and am not averse to change. I will always try something if it comes on the market.

2. As little as possible and just enough to keep the grass alive. It's a vast change compared with 30 years ago when we used to lash the fertiliser on!

3. I fertilise greens and tees perhaps three times in a growing season and once in winter. But I only fertilise the fairways once every three years. We have had four USGA sand based greens constructed and the other 14 will also be changed in due course so the regime will alter then.

4. Yes. I am concerned about artificial fertilisers and what they do to the environment. Products such as seaweed, hoof and horn and dried blood are very good in my view.

5. Yes. We will have extra staff in due course and that will give us the opportunity to use more organic materials as we will have more time to mix the materials by hand.