

YOUR LETTERS ARE NEEDED!

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Excellent Issue

A quick response to the May issue - excellent! A number of first class thought-provoking articles. A small typographical error in my piece on R & A fertiliser use survey - the average use of fungicides was £1800 not £180! (I wish it were). With fungicides being outlawed in Europe (and, because of gross over-feeding, fungicides are never more needed there), we shall see more web comments about European tournaments proceeding despite the horrendous scarring of the greens of the host courses due to disease.

May I make constructive comments on some of the articles. First, using genetically modified (GM) Perm type bent (*Agrostis palustris* X, not *A. stolonifera* please!) may permit "protected" GM bent greens to be sprayed with round-up (glyphosate) to eliminate *Poa annua* invasion into such turf. There are however two problems. One, we are stuck with that GM bent - and we know they do not suit most golf courses in Europe. If they do not thrive or show faults, when they are sprayed will we be left with poor bent, not *Poa*/bent? Hopefully also, the introducers will not price exorbitantly because of a monopoly. The inventors of GM glyphosate resistant soya bean were shamed out of going for royalties and such 3rd world produced soya seed now dominates Africa/Asian cropping, with no problems and vastly increased yields and lower production costs but without financial support or US intervention or help.

Regarding moles, why no mention of the standard strychnine-baited worms methods of mole control - still the best but (sensibly) permitted only under licence by authorised mole-catchers? For every man who is a good trapper (which I am!) there are a score who admit defeat and employ trappers.

I must send my unstinting compliments to Robert Laycock on his piece on (not) rebuilding greens. In my experience relaying is rarely justified and even less often results in improvement. Why is it, (as my old friend Malcolm Peake reports on Royal Sydney) that those greens most often relaid are those built in the last decade or two? Clearly, often because of bad specifications, bad supervision, not using correct specified materials and construction methods etc. Nevertheless, still the commonest reason is bad post-constructional management. The best of contracts ends in disaster if such management is wrong - and often, indeed, unaltered from that which caused the problem in the first place, which suggested relaying.

I certainly endorse Robert's attack on some agronomists with too close an association with particular architects and indeed certain contractors. We have to understand that in the present circumstances relaying is their only income, with few if any new courses being built.

Readers may not know that the number of US courses with true USGA GS greens is "not more than 4%" (USGA GS source). I treasure the comment of an erstwhile agronomist who could not accept the huge investment over so many years on research into such specialised and by no means invariably applicable specifications, constantly changing criteria and no means of providing any effective control on its pedantic specifications - now advisory not mandatory.

I smile to myself when I compare the hugely greater number of greens built to my specification over the past (nearly) 50 years, which I produced initially solely from practical drainage experience and long established soil criteria, based on traditional golf, which has been critically investigated at regular intervals and never found wanting and what is more have never had to be relaid or have given the slightest cause for complaint, provided only that post-constructional management was on correct lines. Some are now 35 years old and very good - but then they have been looked after by good greenkeepers!

Congratulations on a stimulating issue.

J.H. Arthur, Hon Member
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**Whispering
Grass**

Are you in possession of a juicy piece of gossip and are just dying to tell someone? Or have you just moved job and want to pass on the good news?

A typical example appeared in a recent *Around the Green* column:
Who was the person who thought he'd overslept on hearing The Counterfeit Stones playing Honky Tonk Woman in the Majestic Hotel during Harrogate? He jumped up, got himself dressed and down to the ball room only to discover it was the sound check!

Let us at Greenkeeper International know and we'll spread the word. Names could be withheld to protect the innocent... or not so innocent!

The Editor will need to know your name, and in specific cases discrete checks made, but he will protect his sources. Just email your info to: scott@bigga.co.uk titled **Whispering Grass**.