

YOUR LETTERS ARE NEEDED!

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What does the future hold

The STRI has indulged again in its love of writing ill informed comments about the use of soil biology to help greenkeepers produce better playing surfaces.

Based on out of date information, using results generated by a trial, the protocols of which any student with a basic grounding in healthy soil could see were seriously flawed and could not give a quantifiable result, Bob Taylor wrote an article that is many years out of date, full of contradictions and factual errors.

The whole point of using microbial inoculants and biostimulants is to reduce chemical use and toxic residues in the soil. This allows you to recreate, as far as possible, the microbial food chain of bacteria, fungi, mycorrhizal fungi, protozoa and beneficial nematodes that inhabit healthy soil.

Grass has evolved over millions of years to rely on microbial associations for growth and no amount of wishful thinking by the STRI will change the basic processes of nature. Plants will grow in a sea of chemicals; but if pesticide use is to be reduced, then methods of applying and maintaining the microbes essential for plant growth to become viable in intensively used sports turf must be used.

When the soil food chain is complete nutrients are recycled, thatch is converted to humus, and the natural growth promotion and disease suppression properties of the soil can be used to benefit the growth of sturdy, fine grasses for a good playing surface.

Cleaning chemically saturated soil takes time, incredible results can be seen in weeks or it can take a year or more, which is why all reputable biotech companies work out individual programmes and provide technical support to ensure constant improvements.

Recent research has shown more about the mechanics of disease suppression, which microbes favour poa annua and how fine grasses can be promoted, how to use thatch to produce humus, improve CEC and nutrient retention and more importantly how all this works on golf greens and tees.

Using microbial additives to develop healthy soil using natural processes to recycle nutrient, promote fine grass growth and disease suppression is now part of the modern greenkeepers management strategy, hype it most certainly is not.

Symbio will be holding a series of free seminars, covering the latest developments in creating and managing healthy soils to the greenkeepers advantage, to which all greenkeepers and STRI consultants are invited. At the time of writing the following venues have been fixed.

Three Rivers Golf Club, Chelmsford, Essex, 12th November
St Andrews, Fife 13th November (12.30 start)
Marriot Tudor Park Golf Club, Maidstone Kent, 19th November
Stamford Golf Club, Stalybridge, Cheshire, 26th November
Hinskey Heights Golf Club, S, Hinskey, Oxfordshire
27th November

Each Seminar will start at 2.00pm if you would like to attend please call Symbio on 01372 456 101.

Martin Ward, Managing Director, Symbio

What does the future hold 2

I read the article you published by Bob Taylor of the STRI "What does the future hold" with some dismay. The general tone and unscientific nature of the article seems to quite unnecessarily set out to damage a growing biotechnology industry which, in my experience, has a lot to offer Course Managers.

At Radcliffe we first started working with microbes in 1995 because we were desperate, with thatch, black layer and disease problems; we had tried all the cultural practices mentioned by Mr Taylor without success.

The STRI advised us that the solution was to rebuild our greens. The cost of doing so was prohibitive so we looked for another solution and in the end we trialed a solution developed by Symbio on five greens. The results were so good that within a month we treated all the greens and microbial additives have been a central part of our course management ever since.

Thatch and black layer quickly degraded and the greens dried out in winter, but most importantly the total programme was paid for in savings to our fungicide budget because fusarium and other diseases almost disappeared.

The improved percolation, root growth and grass cover permit play for at least an extra 30 days a year on the main greens, bent grasses are replacing poa annua and as far as I can see there is no hype, at Radcliffe all claims made for the microbial additives have been met.

Les Wake, Secretary, The Radcliffe on Trent GC

What does the future hold 3

I read Bob Taylor's article "What does the future hold" in the October issue of Greenkeeper International.

From his comments he seems to be knocking Symbio. I used Symbio products when I worked in Greece, from 1997 until I left at the end of last year. I used them under very difficult conditions, temperatures on greens in June, July and August were 40 degrees plus. My irrigation water came from the hotel's sewage treatment plant, with the only good thing about that, being I did not need any additional NPK.

I believe you feed the soil and not the grass and everything that Martin Ward of Symbio told me about his products and what they would do for me worked.

I cannot speak highly enough about Symbio's products and their employees.

In his article Bob states we still need to use aeration, and I agree with him. However, in the trial the STRI conducted between May and November, which I make that a six-month period they only aerated once, I aerated 12 times a year, and I am sure I am not alone in believing in aerating every month.

Symbio never told me that I could get better results by using their products and I could also stop aeration. If the STRI were going to conduct a trial I would expect them to conduct it as any sensible Head Greenkeeper would.

Anybody reading this article who had never used bio products, would think that all of us forward thinking Greenkeepers had wasted our club's money. Oh, how wrong they would be.

J.H. Bragg, Ex Head Greenkeeper, Porto
Elounda Golf Club, Crete, Greece

This debate will continue in next month's issue