

YOUR LETTERS ARE NEEDED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk

Sycophantic Article

Having just read your article on Woodbury Park Golf Club, I thought I was reading "Hello" magazine and not the Greenkeeper. It was in my opinion totally sycophantic throughout with only a passing reference at the end of the article as to what the greenstaff actually did and then what fantastic knowledge did we glean from that "we cut fairways, tees and greens and semi rough" etc. Oh yes the greens are cut and bunkers are raked at weekends. Is that the sum total of knowledge that can be passed on, apart from if the Atomic bomb went and some staff survived they would still be prepared to die for him, I suppose from radiation poisoning preparing the course, "in much less time". If nothing else, it gave us all here a good laugh at break time.

Come on Editor, we deserve better than this.
Guy Woods, Course Manager, Bath GC

Unbelievable!

Having just read October's edition of Greenkeeper International and, in particular, the course feature I must say it was unbelievable, and not in a good way either.

He (Nigel Mansell) is phoning up his Course Manager on a daily basis for such mundane things as height of cut and fertiliser use! He also thinks that quote "There isn't a guy on Ian's team who wouldn't die for him." Die for him? Nigel, you need to get out more. It's a golf course you're talking about, not liberating Iraq.

Also Ian Cheney. It's not big and it's not clever to have a 12 man team working 100 hours each. I only hope the HSE hasn't read it!

Stephen Eccles, Preston, Lancs

Congratulations Keith!

May I through the letters pages of your publication write to express my congratulations to Keith Scruton on his recent success as Toro Student of the year for 2003.

I have known and taught Keith for three years now during his time at Myerscough College studying for a Higher National Diploma in Turf Grass Science and Golf Course Management - from which he successfully graduated in June of this year.

During this time Keith proved to be an excellent student bringing to his studies the value of his experience as a practising Greenkeeper.

Undertaking a higher education course on a part time basis while working in the sportsturf industry is no easy task - yet Keith brought both dedication and enthusiasm to his studies. Difficult times leading up to his final year tested Keith to the limit but with support from BIGGA and from the Sportsturf team at Myerscough, Keith went on not only to pass the course but to be awarded a top academic prize.

His success in achieving the Toro award is testimony to Keith's knowledge, experience and professionalism. I know that he will be an excellent ambassador for the British sportsturf industry.

Congratulations Keith.

Colin Stanfield, Programme Leader
Sportsturf, Myerscough College

Thank You

Having just participated in the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award, I must congratulate Toro and BIGGA for a truly wonderful experience, when everyone met in the Manor on Sunday evening all eight finalists looked very nervous, but as the night continued we all began to relax.

The next day was again a nery tense day, but when everyone met up in the bar after their interviews, the tension began to disappear. After the results everyone met up for a most enjoyable night and I also had the pleasure of meeting the previous year's winner Murray Long, who is a really top guy and along with, Robert, Paul, and Scott, we had a game of ten pin bowling none of us will forget for a very long while.

I would also like to wish Keith all the best on his trip to America and a personal thanks to Peter Mansfield and Andy Brown for an experience of a life time along with all the staff at BIGGA HOUSE. I would also like to wish all the finalists all the best in there careers and hope to see you all in the future.

John Talbot, Head Greenkeeper,
Ravensworth Golf Club

Working Abroad

While reading the Education section in the October 2003 issue of "Greenkeeper International", I came upon the article, entitled "Overseas Exchanges". Having read it, with its reference to foreign greenkeepers working in the United Kingdom, I considered what would be the reverse process in obtaining a job not just in Europe but beyond.

My enquiry, open to anyone who could assist. What are the requirements in working aboard, where do you find out where these jobs are advertised i.e. publications, web sites, etc. and are there any recruitment agencies who could help?

Gavin Townsend, townsendgavin@aol.com

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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