

# The Greener Approach to Greenkeeping

Andy Dawe, Materials Sector Manager for WRAP's Glass Programme, explains how greenkeepers can adopt a sustainable approach to resource management.

There is a growing interest in taking a sustainable approach to golf course management and as the number of recycled products available on the market increases, golf course greenkeepers now have sustainable alternatives for their turf management and landscaping needs.

Using recycled products and implementing recycling schemes at a course not only demonstrates a responsible attitude to members but it also makes the course stand out from the rest.

## Recycled products – the choices for greenkeepers

Greenkeepers need to have the confidence that using a recycled product will give them the same high standards of performance as existing products. This is why WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) has undertaken extensive work testing recycled products to ensure that they meet the necessary standards in terms of look, quality and performance. Recycled products which are already available include:

### Recycled glass-derived sand

Research to compare the performance of recycled glass-derived sand with conventional sand was carried out at the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) between 2002 and 2004. They identified three potential uses for recycled glass-derived sand: As putting green rootzone; top dressing on fairways or tees; and finally as a bunker sand.

Overall, glass-derived sand is capable of complying with USGA specifications and can provide benefits such as improvements to drainage, greater stability underfoot and reduced ball plugging on impact, when compared to conventional sands.

### Compost

Compost derived from garden trimmings and cuttings is especially suited for landscaping applications on fairways and in planted areas. The organic matter in the compost helps to improve the soil structure, increase grass seed germination and improve regrowth in divots on tees and fairways.

It also provides nutrients such as nitrogen in a slow release form that 'greens up' grass (without excessive grass growth), and many of the micro-organisms present are able to suppress turf disease.

### Wood

Landscaping around golf courses is comprehensive and often labour intensive. Using recycled woodchips as a mulch helps suppress weed growth and also gives flowerbeds an attractive finish. They can also be



used as walkway cover, which is more forgiving to players' spikes than gravel or shale, and will not damage grass cutting machinery should it be spread onto the grass.

### Plastic

Fences, walkways, signage and benches can all be constructed from recycled plastic. These products are highly durable and last up to four times longer than traditional timber. Products are low maintenance without the need for regular painting or treatment as they are impervious to rot and infestation and do not lose colour from sun exposure. Other benefits they offer over wood include non-slip characteristics and vandal resistance.

### The Carden Park Experience

One golf course leading the way in its adoption of recycling initiatives is the Carden Park Golf Club, near Chester, part of the DeVere Group. The course has 54 holes spread across an imposing 750-acre estate and is a Nicklaus designed course together with the Cheshire Championship Course.

Andy Campbell MG CGCS, Golf Courses & Estates Manager at Carden Park as well as Chairman of BIGGA 2004, believes it is only a matter of time before other golf courses also put environmental awareness at the top of their agenda.

Golf courses can generate a lot of waste and Carden Park is no different, but the way it deals with its waste certainly is. This course, along with two of the other larger courses within the DeVere Group - the Belfry and Slaley Hall - is taking a very proactive approach to recycling and environmental awareness, setting an example for the other courses within the Group.

Andy Campbell explains, "We have installed a system at the course which recycles all the water we use. For example, the water used to wash the machinery is collected and recycled, and the treated effluent water from the hotel is reused as irrigation water."

"We also regularly top up the water levels in the ponds using recycled water from the drainage system. This 'closing of the loop' in terms of recycling our water is a real breakthrough and not only demonstrates our environmental awareness, but saves the course money as well."

One of the easiest ways for a golf course to take up the recycling challenge is through the use of mulch derived from composted materials. "At Carden Park, all our grass clippings are collected and added to our compost heap. We then have our own round the year stock of organic compost to use as mulch and in any landscaping projects around the course," said Andy.

For the last 5 - 6 years, BIGGA has been proactive in encouraging

environmental initiatives and sustainability, most recently with the Golf Environment Competition. Andy sees the competition as an excellent way for greenkeepers to learn from other golf courses' experiences.

"There is bound to be some reluctance to change from traditional products, however most golf course managers are recognising that there are genuine benefits to using recycled products and seeing their colleagues' success can only add to this. In fact, some courses find that their own members soon follow suit and start to compost at home after seeing how successful it is on the course."

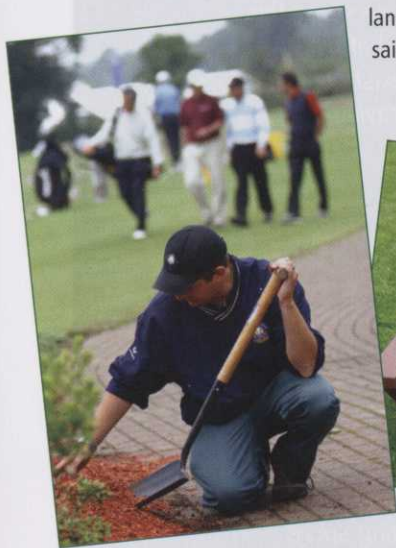
Looking to the future, Andy believes there is still more that the greenkeeping industry can do and he is confident that this is set to change through increased emphasis on training and education.

"With the younger generation coming up through the greenkeeping ranks, issues such as protecting the environment, reducing wastage and using recycled materials are at the forefront of their minds. They have a lot of enthusiasm for this change in attitude and, in time, taking a sustainable approach to golf course greenkeeping will become second nature to them."

#### WRAP's involvement

At this year's PGA Seniors' Championship held at Carden Park, WRAP demonstrated a number of recycled products appropriate for golf courses such as a practice bunker constructed using recycled glass-derived sand and recycled wood mulch pathways. Visitors were also able to see benches made from recycled plastic and compost used in planting areas.

Working in partnership with BIGGA - most notably in its education programme - and a number of innovative golf courses, WRAP plans to ensure that as many greenkeepers as possible see how performance and reputation can be enhanced by switching to a greener approach to greenkeeping.



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