

APPLICATION RATES

A normal spring or autumn top dressing application would be around 3-6 kg/m². This would equate to around one and a half to three tonnes for a golf green of around 300 square metres. Three and a half to seven tonnes for a football pitch.

Jim Arthur 1920-2005

Past BIGGA Chairman Gordon Child pays personal tribute to his friend and mentor Jim Arthur.

The world of greenkeeping and the turf industry as a whole lost a giant of a man on Saturday May 14 2005. I first met Jim Arthur in 1952, when he still worked for the STRI. He was one of the lecturers who came into Leeds College of Art and Technology, and I was sitting a turf culture course at the time, we have been in contact ever since. I was sad to see him on the morning of his passing, fighting to the end.

It is impossible to go through Jim's life in full as I would need a book to do him justice, but briefly Jim was trained at Reading University to be a farmer and then went on to be a Captain in the forces before joining the STRI. Here he changed tack and concentrated on fine turf and one of his sayings to greenkeepers was: "Listen to the farmer and do exactly the opposite."

He briefly managed a seed company before becoming a freelance agronomist advising over 500 golf courses and being advisor to the R&A. I write this as a personal tribute to a very good friend.

Although I had known Jim for over 50 years, it was the last 25 or so we became very close, living only 30 miles apart. We were very often in daily touch either by phone or meeting, and I have spent hundreds of hours in his conservatory putting the world to rights. Those who knew him well would know how much he disliked grey squirrels, and he always had his air rifle at the ready.

He would jump up in mid sentence to take a pop at one in the garden, though I never actually saw him hit one. So it was ironic that the first day he moved into the hospice, the garden was full of them, but after a day or so none were to be seen. The word must have got around.

The enthusiasm for his work never left him, and his beliefs never changed from the time I heard him in 1952 to the day he died. Jim was a traditionalist and he fought everything and everyone vehemently who opposed those ideals. Few people in our industry escaped a tongue lashing at some time or other, so strong were his beliefs, but one thing you could always rely on was that Jim, if asked, would always try to help.

I well remember that when I was fighting at Cannington College to build a golf course to train young greenkeepers on and being told: "We'll give you the land, but we have no money." So I turned to Jim for help and, within a short time, with his expertise and persuasive manner, the course was built, a course that hundreds of students have benefited from over the years.

Jim was a very generous man, I know lots of greenkeepers who rang him for help and without hesitation he would offer free advice. He would give talks to greenkeepers, Sections and Regions without ever charging a fee, such was the stature of this man. He was equally at home talking to top experts as he was to students and he enjoyed every minute of it.

Some of my fondest memories of Jim came during the time he started

to write Practical Greenkeeping, a book which had taken us years to persuade him to do, but once started it took over his life and some others too. He would ring three or four and even more times a day, not just to me but a few others, just to run something past you.

His dedication was unbelievable, and when you take into account his age and the fact that Audrey, his wife, was ill and needed constant attention, it was amazing that the book was completed. Practical Greenkeeping was funded by the R&A, and that is a measure of the high esteem in which his knowledge and expertise were held. We must all be thankful that the book will always be there to refer to and I am sure it will be used as a tool in the education of greenkeepers for a long time to come.

Jim Arthur's name is known the world over; his advice was sort after by the best. He had many critics, particularly from those who wished or tried to make a fast buck from encouraging the wrong grasses, which he waged constant war on. Jim was also very fond of making predictions, and what was irritating to many was that he was nearly always proved right.

He always said that in time the bulk of golf clubs would have to go back to traditional management of courses because finances would not be available for the high cost maintenance methods some used. How right he was. Finances in most clubs have now dipped and this, coupled with pesticide and chemical legislation, are forcing greenkeepers and clubs to go back to the more austere methods that Jim always called for. So it is sad in some ways that it has come about at this time.

He had many interests outside that of agronomy and one such interest was wildlife. His love and knowledge for animals and birds, apart from grey squirrels, was excellent. Not very long ago he correctly identified two Egyptian Geese, which came into our field at home, when no one around seemed to know. So I think it is fitting that I should end this small tribute to him with this little story from his son, Richard.

Jim always used to feed foxes which came into his back garden and when he was taken into the hospice they had not been fed for five days. When on the Saturday, the day Jim passed away, Richard went out to feed them and for the first time a young fox cub came to the dish to feed. A new life came in as one went out.

Jim Arthur will be sadly missed and I for one will always be very grateful for his friendship and help over so many years. We who were his friends were very privileged.

