

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

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

Letters ▶▶▶

Response to July Greenkeeper International Article 'The Appliance of Science'

I am a horticulturist that has been involved in the US golf and composting industries since 1984. I have renovated and built several golf courses, including tees and greens, using compost with great success. I have also been working with the UK composting industry since 1999, most recently through WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme). There was a statement made in the 'The Appliance of Science' article in July's Greenkeeper International regarding the use of composted green waste in topdressings that I would like to address.

Statement: A growing practice among some top dressing suppliers is the use of recycled composted green waste as one of the organic constituents. However, there remain some question marks over the effect this might have on consistent product quality, the argument being that no two batches of recycled waste can ever be the same and therefore the pH level of the top dressings are bound to have variations.

Response: Obviously, like any industry, there can be good and bad players. I have always suggested to companies that I work with, that if you find a good supplier of green compost (or anything else), stick with them - even if the product costs you a few pence more. It will be worth it in the long run. There will always be composters that are more 'product minded' than others, and they are the ones that greenkeepers should be buying from - as they are likely to work harder on manufacturing a consistent product. However, it should be noted that 'no two batches' of peat, sand, topdressing, topsoil 'can ever be the same' either. This is a myth. These are all 'natural' products that we work to keep as consistent as possible. I do not minimise that goal in the least, but remember, the organic constituent of a topdressing only makes up 1 to 2% of the mix (by weight), therefore has very little overall affect on the overall consistency of the top dressing.

To address the issue of green compost consistency, The British Standards Institutions Publicly Available Specification 100 (BSI PAS 100) was launched in November 2002, in conjunction with WRAP and The Composting Association. The specification covers the entire composting process - from raw materials (inputs), process and quality control, to laboratory testing and traceability. Essentially, the programme is an intensive quality control programme, which monitors incoming materials, the ongoing composting process, as well as tests the final product. As one of the first quality assurance schemes for composted products in the UK, BSI PAS 100 should give professional end users the confidence that they are buying a safe and consistent product. Few other products in the golf industry likely go through as much scrutiny. There is currently more than one million tonnes of BSI PAS 100 composting capacity in the UK, either certified or in the certification process.

Further, WRAP has completed scientific trials, such as 'Assessment of the potential for site and seasonal variations of composted materials across the UK' to address concerns brought up in the July article. However, the 'variations trial' found minimal variation of the product characteristics within a compost specific site (even from season to season). This research should dispel much of the concern about major variations in green compost quality. With that said, however, compost is produced using a biological process, and therefore, must be closely monitored during processing. The lesson - buy from a reputable composter - and one that is in the BSI PAS 100 scheme. By the way, the STRI also completed an in depth study on the use of green compost as a stand alone topdressing (for fairways and sports pitches) and as a component to sand-based products ('Demonstration trials of the utilization of composted materials in the maintenance of sports and amenity turfgrass') and the results were very positive. All of these research papers can be found on WRAP's website at www.wrap.org.uk.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention that green composts possess a myriad of benefits when added to a top dressing as an organic constituent. It not only will supply fertilisation, but also possesses an excellent cation exchange capacity (ability to hold nutrients), and has also been shown to suppress several soil borne diseases.

Ron Alexander

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Davie Gall Retires

Davie Gall, who spent the last 30 years as Head Greenkeeper at Cardross GC, retired last month. Davie was one of the West Section's most respected members.

Davie started his career at Buchanan Castle GC as an apprentice in the late 50s, making him the first official apprentice in Scotland.

He moved to Dumbarton GC at the age of 23 as Head Greenkeeper, before moving to Estorol GC in Portugal, and becoming one of the first Greenkeepers to move abroad.

After a successful period abroad, he moved back to Britain and took up the position of Head Greenkeeper at Ifield GC in Surrey, before his appointment at Cardross GC where he remained for the duration of his career until his retirement.

The Section would like to take this opportunity to extend to Davie and his wife Liz our very best wishes for their future. May they both have a very long and happy retirement.

Written by Derek Duthie, Aitkins.

Opportunity

I have presented numerous television programmes on terrestrial channels, about gardens and garden design for the last ten years. Combined with journalism in national broadsheets, books published throughout Europe and the US, and my celebrity clients, my profile in the gardening world is reasonably high. (See my website: www.ann-mariepowell.com for further information.)

I've been very successful in securing one of only 20 exclusive show garden plots at the Chelsea Flower Show 2007 (May), showcasing the top-end of international garden design. I am therefore very happy to offer a rare sponsorship opportunity in a Central London location. The benefits to an investor are huge.

Commercial benefits are: Corporate Hospitality packages including: Gala tickets (supported by Royals, Celebrities and Captains of Industry); Business Breakfasts; Exhibitor Guest Evening and Hospitality Village. Media coverage including: guaranteed primetime TV and radio nationally and overseas; preview features in national newspapers and magazines and contact with over 1,300 journalists, programme makers and photographers. Plus the marketing opportunities are enormous.

I am available for discussion on the numbers below.

Hope you and yours are well,

Ann-Marie Powell.

Cost of sponsorship: between £150,000 to £250,000.

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