

COMPACT TRACTOR PROVES IDEAL FOR TRAINING COURSES

Growing demand for grounds care and amenity equipment training courses has resulted in a rapid expansion of the machinery fleet used by Littlefield Manor Training Services Limited.

Owned and managed by former Agricultural Training Board instructor, John Tangye, Littlefield Manor Training Services was established in the 1990s as a provider of general agricultural and horticultural short training courses.

Although farm tractors, implements and hand-held equipment remain very much in evidence at the company's headquarters, they have been joined in the past year by a 32hp Massey Ferguson compact tractor and a number of matching attachments including a 400-litre mounted sprayer.

The result has enabled Littlefield Manor to extend its range of National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC) sprayer courses to include staff employed by golf courses, local authorities, landscape contractors, plant nurseries and public and private gardens, among others. "We are training close to 400 people a year and virtually all of our courses lead to trainees being assessed for an NPTC certificate of competence," explained John who, as the



Surrey agent for the NPTC, is responsible for also organising independent assessments throughout the county. "Having a range of relevant, up-to-date equipment is a key factor in the success and popularity of our courses and we own the majority of the kit that is used for training purposes."

John Tangye (wearing red overalls) of Littlefield Manor Training Services, guides horticultural students through basic tractor operation and maintenance procedures with the help of his MF1531 compact tractor.

SURVEY REVEALS HIGH LEATHERJACKET NUMBERS

An autumn 2006 survey has revealed that leatherjacket numbers are again high and that greenkeepers and groundsmen, particularly in the south of the country, should assess the risk of turf damage by leatherjacket activity and take action.

Although mean leatherjacket numbers are down on 2005 levels at 97.1 per m², they are still significantly higher than the long term mean of 69.7 per m² for all survey sites in the period 1992 – 2006. Regionally, mean numbers of leatherjackets have fallen in the Midlands and north but in the southern region they are 28% higher than in 2005 and the highest since 2001.

Adequate soil moisture in the autumn is critical for the survival of crane fly eggs and newly hatched leatherjacket larvae. All counties experienced heavier than average rainfall in late August, and apart from a warm dry week ending 12 September 2006, the weather in autumn 2006 has been conducive to egg and young leatherjacket larvae survival.

"We have been routinely monitoring leatherjacket numbers, via an independent organisation, since 1992," explains Andy Cawley, Sales and Marketing Manager, Specialty Products of Dow AgroSciences.

"Monitoring helps greenkeepers and groundsmen plan control measures against leatherjacket damage. It certainly helped alert them in 2006 when 2005 survey figures revealed exceptionally high numbers of leatherjackets in the soil. In the south numbers are well up on last year and therefore we would recommend greenkeepers take action now and perform a risk assessment of the damage potential by leatherjackets to their turf roots."

