



Offering effective aeration up to depths of 40cm, the latest Toro ProCore SR Series of deep-tine, tractor-mounted aerators were previously manufactured in the US by Southern Green. There is an ever increasing range of kit to choose from, the key to the best buy being to check it works well with your tractor and has the versatility you may demand in the future.

# Aeration

# Left field thinking can pay off

Aeration equipment discussions tend to focus upon types of machines; their working speeds, operating depths, tine sizes and potential hole spacing. But it is how a piece of kit can be used that can make a real difference, as James de Havilland discusses...



**Just take a look at the range of aeration kit that is on offer. In brief, you are absolutely spoilt for choice.**

This does mean it is perhaps difficult initially to select machines to try on demonstration, but think of what you need to do or are seeking to achieve and matters can start to be less difficult.

It is also well worth asking around to see how neighbouring courses and aeration kit users are getting on with a certain make or model.

In most cases, modern machines tend to get on and do a job with very little bother. Details are what often sets certain models apart; the time it takes to swap tines or adjust working depths. Vibration or

a unit's ability to work when conditions may be on the cusp of ideal may also come into play.

Subtle design differences do impact upon performance. Operating costs, after sales support and speed are also key factors.

What is often overlooked, however, is how versatile a given machine is. Sometimes using an aerator for a set of task you have not considered can lead to surprising results.

**Lateral thinking at Hankley Common**

Hankley Common Golf Club's Course Manager, Gareth Roberts, is an example of someone who thinks

slightly differently, his Verti-Drain 7521 having proven its abilities to alleviated compaction problems all over the course. He describes it as 'the perfect machine for the job'.

Gareth has been at Hankley Common Golf Club for almost 18 years and Course Manager since 1999.

Hankley's first Verti Drain was purchased back in 1987 and was hired out to a number local Golf Clubs to help them improve their playing surfaces. Some four years ago Gareth took delivery of a new 7521, this unit remaining for his sole use.

Gareth suggests the Verti Drain is a versatile tool and has used it over the entire course. This includes all

**A combination of high levels of play and routine trafficking by ride-on mowers can lead to a range of compaction issues. Aeration can help, but you do need to vary working depths and choose the right tools for the best results.**



playing areas. Of equal note, he has used the machine for more unusual tasks. One example relates to a tee he had laid with new turf that was struggling to get a good connection with the soil.

The 'normal' policy could well have been to core down perhaps four or five inches. Gareth set to and hollow cored down to eight inches. This solved the problem, with good root development and a healthy playing surface.

Another problem area for Gareth was the 14th green. After heavy rain, this green would hold the water. Gareth used ½ inch tines working down to 10 inches to help resolve the problem, a top dressing, mixed with extra sand, being employed to fill the holes. A simple idea that proved a solution to an annoying problem.

Gareth suggests by using the Verti Drain continuously at the same depth can create a hard pan underneath the surface. To get round this potential problem he alternates between ¾ inch tines at 10 inches depth and one inch tines at eight inches deep.

The bunkers at Hankley Common Golf Club are of a fair size and a couple used to suffer from puddling after a heavy night's rainfall.

Again the solution was to run a pass through with the Verti Drain. Then there is the need to reinstate worn tracks on the heath; these tracks may be old footpaths maintenance paths, all of which have had considerable foot fall. Subject to compaction, the cure has again been to use the Verti Drain.

In these instances, the machine is fitted with one inch tines but only worked to down to three inches. A really slow pass, with close centres between the holes is the best approach, with heather seed brushed in afterwards.

"We may not see establishment of the seedlings for six to nine months," said Gareth.

"It's a slow process but good ground preparation helps. It is a worthwhile job that has delivered good results."



**TOP:** The bunkers at Hankley Common Golf Club are of a fair size and a couple used to suffer from puddling after a heavy night's rainfall. The solution was to run a pass through with the Verti Drain.

**ABOVE:** Gareth suggests by using the Verti Drain continuously at the same depth can create a hard pan underneath the surface. To get round this potential problem he alternates between ¾ inch tines at 10 inches depth and one inch tines at eight inches deep.

**LEFT:** Hankley Common GC's Course Manager, Gareth Roberts is an example of someone who thinks slightly differently, his Verti-Drain 7521 having proven its abilities to alleviate compaction problems all over the course. He describes it as 'the perfect machine for the job.'



## Hankley Common: The inland links course

Hankley Common Golf Club in Farnham, Surrey was first opened for play over nine holes in 1897 seeing expansion to a full 18 hole course in 1922. Sometimes described as offering the closest resemblance to a seaside links course inland, the 7th hole is looked upon as being one of the finest par 3s in the country and the magnificent 18th a superb but challenging finishing hole.