

# Thatch

**Many of you have heard of THATCH, many of our greenkeeping woes are centred on thatch. Whether it's preventing thatch, removing thatch or even removing the cause of thatch, it's an important factor throughout the golf course world. But what exactly is it? And why is it such an issue?**

In simple terms thatch or organic matter is the waste material of the plant. This is similar to fat or cholesterol in the animal world. If this is not prevented or controlled a build up of thatch can occur and similar to fat or cholesterol you will become unhealthy with a host of problems on your hands:

- Pest and disease – excessive thatch creates the perfect environment for many little critters.
- Winter Playability – wet thatch will produce softer,

spongy ground conditions. This will have a negative effect on the ball roll, bounce & speed. In severe cases the result may be unplayable surfaces and loss of revenue.

- Summer Playability – during dry spells, thatch can become water repellent (hydrophobic) and this can make the ground very dry and hard. In severe cases, a loss of grass can occur (dry patch).

- Plant health – the plant health will suffer resulting in more fertiliser, chemical and water usage. A vicious circle!

### The role of aeration.

The key to healthy turf is without doubt air. A good aeration plan is integral to thatch control. Aeration is like exercise; the more exercise we do the more our 'fat' decreases, the healthier we get, the better we feel. In the plant world this is the same.

We often talk about the living things in soil, well in truth, the

# committee corner

A new series aimed at offering information and advice to those golf club members who are elected to Green Committees

living things below our feet actually live in the air spaces in the soil. Aeration provides the air that helps all the beneficial organisms living below our feet, in turn those guys break down our unwanted thatch, root structure improves and here lies the foundation of a healthy grass plant.

### Hollow tine

This is similar to liposuction, physically pulling the fat or thatch out. This also provides the greatest amount of air in the soil and is a great way to exchange the unwanted thatch with free-draining top-dressing.

### Drainage

Good drainage is integral, if the soil is wet and waterlogged those beneficial air spaces

are filled with water, if it's full of water then we have no air, and no air means no life. Many times greenkeepers are pressurised into aerating during the wet winter months.

Whilst this can work on free draining sites, on poorly drained areas this can create more problems. Those lovely holes soon get filled with water and the air is pushed out. Again no air... no life!

At times aeration is an unpopular operation, but without this operation your course will suffer.

A healthy course will not maintain itself; similar to our own health we require food & water in moderation, plenty of exercise and air.

So the next time your greenkeeper is aerating the greens, think of the positives, think of the benefits and think about supporting.



## in the shed answers

### QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Jack Nicklaus, with six.
2. Jack Nicklaus ('65 & '66) Nick Faldo ('89 & '90); Tiger Woods ('01 & '02)
3. Arnold Palmer with 50 1955-2004
4. Gary Player with 52
5. Gene Sarazen
6. 25, 7, 7-iron,
8. 21 years and three months
9. 63 – Nick Price (3rd round '86) and Greg Norman (1st round '96)

### CROSSWORD

E	C	H	O	A	S	T	R	O	M	E	T	R	Y
L	S	K	E	E	O	P							
A	M	I	S	L	I	B	I	D	I	N	O	S	
H	F	R	D	D	I	G							
W	A	L	T	E	R	K	O	E	N	I	G		
S	E	L	I	E	R	S							
E	S	S	A	Y	E	D	N	E	E	D	L	E	S
M	M	W											
A	L	A	R	M	E	D	O	P	E	N	A	I	R
J	D	A	E	I	T	F							
R	I	C	H	A	R	D	N	I	X	O	N		
X	E	L	L	C	A	A	J	O					
A	P	P	E	L	L	A	N	T	S	D	O	J	O
J	U	I	E	N									
A	N	D	Y	W	A	R	H	O	L	I	S	I	S

### MONSTER SUDOKO

B	C	1	5	7	A	6	9	4	2	8	3
3	7	8	9	5	C	4	2	B	1	6	A
6	2	4	A	B	3	1	8	C	5	7	9
C	3	5	6	8	1	A	7	2	9	4	B
4	A	9	7	3	6	2	B	5	8	1	C
8	1	2	B	9	5	C	4	A	6	3	7
7	6	B	1	A	4	9	3	8	C	2	5
5	4	C	3	2	B	8	1	7	A	9	6
9	8	A	2	6	7	5	C	1	3	B	4
A	5	3	4	1	2	B	6	9	7	C	8
1	B	6	8	C	9	7	5	3	4	A	2
2	9	7	C	4	8	3	A	6	B	5	1

### SQUIGGLY SUDOKO

4	9	2	7	5	8	6	3	1
7	6	1	4	3	2	5	8	9
5	8	3	6	9	1	4	2	7
3	1	6	5	8	4	7	9	2
9	7	4	3	2	6	8	1	5
2	5	8	9	1	7	3	6	4
8	4	7	2	6	9	1	5	3
1	2	5	8	4	3	9	7	6
6	3	9	1	7	5	2	4	8