

A QUICK GUIDE TO...

HAND MOWING A GREEN

Members of the St Andrews Links Trust Greenkeeping Team, experts in the field, offer a few tips on Hand Mowing a Green, a skill they will be showing off to the world in July!

Importance

Cutting the greens on a golf course properly with pedestrian mowers is one of the more skillful and satisfying or enjoyable jobs in greenkeeping. Doing so on greens as large as those on the Old Course where many greens can measure over 100 yards in length or you are preparing for a Tour event or an Open Championship can also be very demanding.

Check your mower

Before leaving the maintenance building, check your mower is operating correctly, it is fuelled up, starts, the blades turn and that the height of cut is correct and the cutting cylinder to bottom blade is set properly.

Carry out a quick visual inspection

When arriving at the green, carry out a quick visual inspection for any stones or other debris which is lying on the green that could damage the mower or the surface and remove them if required, switching worm casts may come into this category if necessary. Remove the pin.

Cut across the low sun

The first thing to consider is to cut across the low sun if you can rather than into and away from it. By doing that you can use the shadow to help see your line. You should change your direction of cut every time to prevent a nap forming and this will also stop previous lines of cut confusing you!



Line it up

For your first line, pick a point at the far end of the green or just beyond it and line it up with another point just behind that. Aim for these two points, never taking your eye off them and don't deviate from this projected line running from you right through the two points and beyond.

Take a wide turn

At the end of the line, take a wide turn if there is room to do so. This is good practice and will give you more time to line up your next one as well as reducing wear on the apron which suffers enough from golfing traffic. From now on when cutting, you should be looking slightly ahead of your mower, (anything from between 5 and 10 yards), for your line rather than looking down at your box. You are trying to overlap your previous line by as little as 20mm so the job requires a lot of concentration and constant attention.

Start again

If you do make a mistake, miss a strip or go off the straight, then you have no option but to go back to where you first went

wrong and start cutting from that section again.

Leave a glove or a screwdriver at the end of the line

At St Andrews, where the grass is often dry even first thing in the morning and growth rates can be quite slow, staff often leave a glove or a screwdriver at the end of the line to help them get lined up again when they turn at the far end to come back.

Switch a sprinkler on

Another tip is to switch a sprinkler on for the shortest of times, just enough to give the green a "mist". It's great when you come in and there is a heavy dew but the downside is that you don't get such a good cut.

The bonus?

Hand mowing should help keep you fit because you will probably walk between 6 and 7 miles on average each time!