

Sowing the seeds



Jayne Leyland recently joined Rigby Taylor as Seed Research and Development Manager. Jim Cook took the opportunity to be the first to throw a few questions her way

What attracted you to Rigby Taylor?

It is a very exciting opportunity to take trialling systems and development of mixtures to another level.

What will the trials involve?

The trials will be sowing out grasses and then treating them with identified management programmes and products to find solutions to whatever the constraints of that site or maintenance regime is. Each trial will be different according to the location.

Where is the first trial you will be involved with since joining Rigby Taylor?

It will be at Furness Golf Club, in Cumbria, and is an environmental stress trial. This is the first sowing of this particular programme.

How are new seeds bred?

Mainly through crossings of existing cultivars with new grasses which are gathered in the wild by the plant breeders. These are then cross-bred to search for the best characteristics.

You start off with maybe 15,000 crossings and going through the process to end up with just one new variety. This process takes between 12 and 15 years. You're always looking forward to improve in terms of characteristics.

What makes a good quality grass seed?

Several things. The characteristics of individual cultivars, the synergy of the mixture, the quality of purity and germination of seed mixture and most importantly choosing the right mixture for the intended purpose. There are some amazing developments now

in grasses and with Rigby Taylor there is the ESP treatment on the seed. What is very important to many greenkeepers is speed of establishment, so you need good quality seed with high viability and fast establishment capability.

What should a greenkeeper think about when buying grass seed?

They should think about individual characteristics that they might require, for example specific disease tolerance or cold weather or drought tolerance.

What is as important as individual cultivar characteristics is actually how the seed mixture has been formulated and put together, so there isn't too much competition between the cultivars in there and one doesn't dominate the other.

So the actual mixture synergy is extremely important.

Is there a correct way to store grass seed?

It should be stored in a cool, dry place and also be in a secure container to avoid attack from vermin.

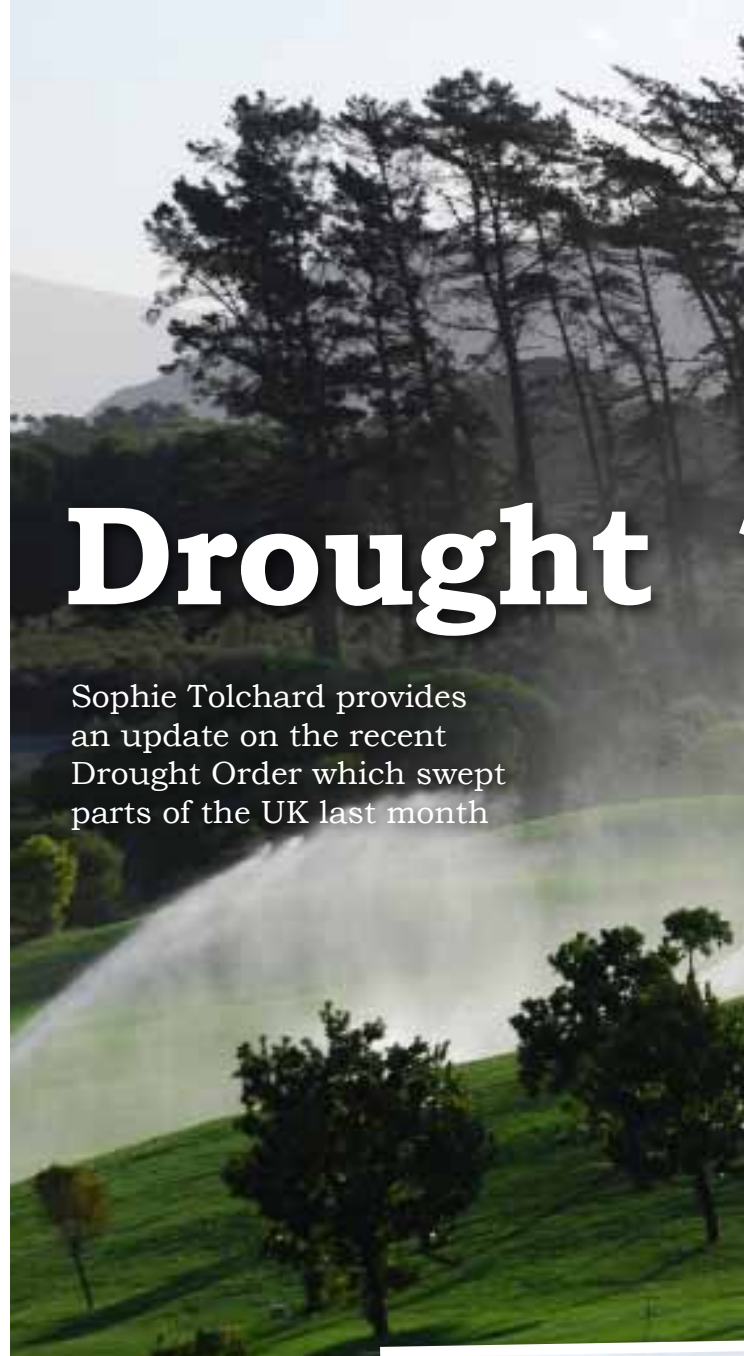
What is the future with regards grass seed?

The future is a combination of new cultivars which are coming through breeding programmes with improved characteristics. New sub-species or species which have got significantly different characteristics from cultivars within that same species.

Also adaptations of species with unique characteristics, for example, temperature tolerance or creeping growth habit. It's a combination of the breeding programmes producing the right material and then the good work of greenkeepers being able to have the product in their armoury to get the maximum out of it.

Drought

Sophie Tolchard provides an update on the recent Drought Order which swept parts of the UK last month



On 5 April a Temporary Use Ban (Hosepipe Ban) came into force in parts of the country covered by seven water companies in the south of England and East Anglia.

When two and a half times the normal amount of rain fell in April and frequent showers continued throughout May, many were left wondering why we are still in a drought.

After the driest two years since records began, groundwater, which feeds the flows of rivers throughout the year and is our most important source of water, remains exceptionally low.

On 29 April, Thames Water announced that it was to exempt golf clubs under its jurisdiction from two major aspects of the hosepipe ban. Golf clubs that have water supplied by Thames Water can now use permanent sprinkler systems underneath their greens.

"The announcement, which is



The initial cost of a reservoir can be recouped over a period of time and they provide an additional protective measure against drought orders
Courtesy of MJ Abbott Limited

The Situation Now

similar to one made recently by Anglian Water... should clear up some of the confusion surrounding conflicting advice given to clubs over the past few weeks," writes Thames Water.

Nonetheless, some clubs were left confused by the conflicting advice that they received from their water board.

"For example, some GCMA members report that their supplier has determined a total ban for the use of sprinkler systems. Others have received less penal reactions when they have approached them, including a scale of allowances for special events and a fixed number of cubic meters to be used per day. And some have been told 'you're a business, so carry on as normal,'" said Keith Lloyd, CEO of the GCMA.

Some relief followed Caroline Spelman's announcement on 11 May that the Environment Agency had decided to move 19 counties out of drought status, including

South Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Bristol, parts of Gloucestershire, parts of Hampshire, most of Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

Although this indicates that there's no threat to the public water supply in these areas this summer, clubs are still subject to some environmental pressures and could move back in to drought if there is another prolonged dry period. DEFRA is working closely with the Environment Agency to continuously monitor and review the situation.

There was better news for other users of turf this month when all seven water companies announced a 28-day exemption for the establishment of newly laid turf, when laid by a landscaper or gardening business, from the 21 May 2012.

Landscaping, turf and gardening businesses were made exempt from the 'hosepipe ban' after it was confirmed that record rainfall had reduced the severity of the on-going water shortage.

There are agreed Codes of Practice with the Turfgrass Growers Association (TGA), the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) and other landscape trade bodies to ensure that the minimum amount of water is used, and as wisely as possible. The TGA's Code of Practice for the watering of newly laid turf is now available on its website at www.turfgrass.co.uk

While gardening businesses are now exempt, the hosepipe ban remains in force in all seven water company areas, those being Thames Water, Anglian Water, South East Water, Southern Water in Kent and Sussex, Veolia Central and South East, which covers much of London and the home-counties, and Sutton and East Surrey Water.

Main image supplied by Revaho UK. Please see Page 63 for more drought news



Some clubs have found the Environment Agency more receptive to borehole applications where an investment is being made in winter storage
Courtesy of MJ Abott Limited