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**Deadlines for three of BIGGA's major competitions are looming. BIGGA's Education & Training Manager, Ken Richardson counts them down, and also previews a new competition...**

# Education update

This month sees the deadlines for entry to three of BIGGA's major competitions. The TORO Award for Greenkeeping Excellence and Student Greenkeeper of the Year Competitions, which have an entry deadline of May 28, and the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and The Grass Roots Trading Company, which has an entry deadline of May 3.

Make sure that your entry is sent to BIGGA HQ by the closing date.

## **The TORO Award for Greenkeeping Excellence**

The search to find the 1999 winner for the TORO Award for Greenkeeping Excellence is hotting up. You still have time to nominate your choice, however, as entries need to be at BIGGA HQ by May 28, you need to make sure that your nomination is in the post today.

Does your Head Greenkeeper deserve to be recognised for his efforts? Does your club want to win a TORO 3000 series triplex mower? Do you want to visit the GCSAA show in New Orleans and the TORO factories in Minneapolis and California in February 2000 for free? If the answer to any of the above is "yes" then fill in and return an official entry form or telephone Ken or Sami on 01347 833800. Remember, this competition is open to all Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers. Initial judging, to select up to eight finalists will take place during June/July, by a panel of experienced, retired Head Greenkeepers, led by Walter Woods. The National Final will be held at BIGGA HOUSE on 24/25 October.

## **TORO Student of the Year**

Entries for the TORO Student of the Year competition need to be at Aldwark Manor by May 28. Regional judging will take place during the week commencing July 26 when a panel of three judges will select up to eight national finalists. The National Final will be held in Harrogate on October 24/25 alongside the The TORO Award for Greenkeeping Excellence Final.

Make sure that your college or training provider submits an entry for this prestigious competition and you could win the TORO Scholarship for 1999, attending the University of Massachusetts for a six weeks turf management course as well as visiting the TORO factories in Minneapolis and California.

## **The BIGGA Golf Environment Competition**

This year, 1999, sees, the Grass Roots Trading Company, joining Amazone Ground Care and BIGGA in sponsoring the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition. Golf clubs throughout Great Britain are beginning to see the benefits of entering, which at the very least can give your club a detailed environmental survey and action plan. However, if you win then your club could receive the £5,000 first prize and the added bonus of being recognised as the top environmentally managed golf course. Complete your application form today and send it to BIGGA HQ or contact Ken or Sami for further details.

## **The Learning Experience 2000**

Planning is continuing for the Learning Experience 2000, which once again will be sponsored by

Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products. With less than 270 days to the Learning Experience week, time is running short but there is still chance for you to have an input. Contact Sami or Ken at BIGGA HOUSE with your ideas.

## **The Y2k Problem**

What is it? Does it affect me? What will it do? Watch out for more details next month.

## **The BIGGA Essay Competition 1999**

Thanks to a suggestion by our Vice Chairman, Elliot Small, we are reintroducing an essay competition for greenkeepers. Full details of the competition will be published soon but briefly:

The overall theme will be "The Past, The Present and The Future" ie to link with BTME 2000. The original essays from a competition run for Greenkeepers between 1912 and 1915 will enable us to compare the past with the present thoughts on greenkeeping issues and to look to the future.

There will be three categories: Head Greenkeepers/ Course Managers and deputies; Assistants and Students aged 25 and over and Assistants and Students aged under 25.

The entrants would be required to write an essay of between 2000 and 2500 words long ie. five to six type written pages.

The Essay would be marked to an agreed criteria by selected BIGGA representatives.

The subject matter would be on the lines of 'Greenkeeping Management Techniques for the 21st Century'.

The last day for entry would be 29 October 1999.

The winners would be announced in the January 2000 edition of Greenkeeper International.

Presentations and readings of essay extracts would be made at BTME2000.

Winners of each category would receive £500 with two runners up in each category receiving £100.

A brochure would be published in 2000 of all the winning essays, together with a number of the essays from 1912 to 1915.

Get thinking and get sharpening your pencils ready to submit your entry in the Autumn.

## **Refund of Fees Scheme**

The maximum refund that can be claimed in any one year has been increased to £250 from 29 March 1999. To be eligible, you must:

- Be a member of BIGGA and have been a member for at least two years
- Have paid your own fees and be able to provide proof of payment.
- Have completed a course or component part of a course and be able to provide proof of completion.
- Not have had the course subsidised by BIGGA.
- Attend a relevant course to your job as a greenkeeper.

If you wish to claim then contact BIGGA HQ for an application form.



## Successful Sheffield seminar

On the 16 March 1999 the Sheffield Section of BIGGA held their first Seminar for over 20 years. It was a big success with over 100 people attending.

Our thanks go to our Trade Members who sponsored the day, namely, Aitkens, Cheshire Turf Machinery, Course Care, Garbutts International Ltd, Glenside Organics, Irrigation Control, Mansfield Sand Company Ltd, Multi Core Aerators Ltd, Ocmis Irrigation UK Ltd, Purdy's Grass Machinery, Rigby Taylor Ltd

and Sisis Equipment Ltd.

Also many thanks to our speakers David Golding, GTC, Bob Taylor, STRI, Ken Richardson, BIGGA, Tracey Maddison, BIGGA, John Coleman, Course Manager, Abbeydale Golf Club and Ian McPherson, Golf Course Construction.

Finally, our grateful thanks to Rotherham Golf Club for allowing us to use their Club for the day.

**Ron Ullathrone**  
 Sheffield Section Secretary

## Keep smiling, Sandy

This is just a short note to reassure Sandy McDivot that not all greenkeepers have lost their sense of humour. It is blatantly obvious that the McDivot series of articles are somewhat tongue in cheek and therefore should be enjoyed as a piece of light relief.

Carry on the good work, Sandy. As for your critics, maybe a sense of humour bypass would be an option.

**Michael Poole,**  
 Assistant Head Greenkeeper  
 Nevill GC, Kent. (Via e-mail)

## Environment action for Golf Courses

Golf clubs across Europe can now demonstrate their concern for the environment by signing up to participate in "Committed to Green" a campaign initiated by the European Golf Association Ecology Unit.

Following a meeting of Ecology Officers representing over 10 national golf federations, held at Vilamoura, Portugal, in February, details of the "Committed to Green" certification process have been finalised, and a common registration format agreed.

"Committed to Green" is a voluntary Environmental Management Programme, through which any European golf club is eligible to seek public recognition for demonstrating good environmental practice. The recognition process involves three stages of certification: Registration; Intermediate Recognition and Full Recognition.

The three levels of certification offer clubs an incentive to participate and then to follow the successive steps of the programme.

To register - clubs need to complete a registration form which gives a profile of the club and its environmental situation, and to provide a copy of the club's environmental policy statement and a list of the members of the club's "Committed to Green" Team.

As clubs progress to subsequent stages, they will address different environmental topics, including nature conservation, water resource

management, integrated turfgrass management and aspects dealing with waste, energy efficiency, education and communications.

Full "Committed to Green" recognition will be based on a comprehensive Environmental Management Programme, in which the candidate clubs clearly demonstrate significant environmental achievements.

This is a long-term process, normally taking at least three years to complete. Successful clubs will also be expected to sustain their commitment.

"The award of the 'Committed to Green' label will be a valuable form of recognition, both for golf clubs and eventually for other sport and recreation facilities," said David Stubbs, Executive Director of the EGA Ecology Unit.

"All fields of activity are these days having to address environmental questions, and it is good that golf is taking a positive lead on this subject. The example set by golf should have wide applications throughout the sport sector."

Since its launch in late 1997, the "Committed to Green" programme has attracted widespread interest throughout the golf community, and from leading environmental organisations. The initiative has been welcomed by the European Commission, United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

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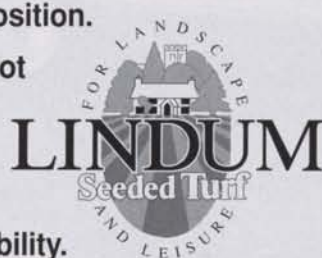
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**Jim Arthur looks back to when he started his career and shows that the advice he gave then is just as relevant now...**



Call Philip Ambury on 01853 344244

# Keeping it simple

Throughout more than 50 years of golf course advisory work I have steadfastly followed the principles impressed on me at the start of my advisory career by three remarkable people, of whom more anon. They taught me the time-proven and indisputable facts on which the basic principles of greenkeeping have depended since time immemorial. These principles have not altered simply because they are based on the needs of the fine textured 'turf' grasses - fine fescues and bent (*Agrostis*) - and these needs like the grasses have never changed. One sees so many passing fashions, hailed as the newest and best ideas, and none last more than a decade, and when they do conspicuously fail, their advocates have already shamelessly switched to the latest gimmick. The most important basis of my advice is and always has been - keep it simple and understandable. Greenkeeping is more of an art than a science.

Soil chemists, physicists, mycologists, soil analysts (particularly them!) and all the other 'ists' are there to support, not to promote unproven policies. Their worst crime is correct observation, wrong deduction. The work of the commercial element of

sports turf management is not to be denigrated providing it is confined to real improvements. Sadly, especially in the case of fertilisers, at times the motivation seems to be to try to create new markets by over-selling. I have maintained for more years than I care to remember, that golf clubs should buy very little fertiliser (and then nitrogen-only). Furthermore, clubs should order only what they need and should resist being pressurised into excessive purchasing.

Yet we still see case after case of gross over-feeding with inorganic fertilisers -

fine turf not colour and traditional greenkeeping as well as giving better playing surfaces is so much cheaper!

To return to my mentors, my introduction to grasses was in 1938 when my professor, a doughty Scot and a golfer of course, while concentrating on agricultural grasses, explained that all the rest were still worth studying, as quite apart from being valued constituents of golf course turf, they were very useful indicators of soil fertility, or the reverse, - even if farmers did regard them as weeds! He started my enthusiasm for grasses, which is still with me. Then came five years in the Army and my close contact with turf on occasions had nothing to do with studying botany but everything to do with survival!

The philosophies taught me by two remarkable men when I joined 'the Research Station' at Bingley just after the war are simple, indisputable and unchanging. I do not understand why I am regarded as "invariably controversial", though Sir Michael Bonallack kindly qualifies this comment in his preface to Practical Greenkeeping adding "but infuriatingly nearly always right".

**If you are presented with techno-babble, demand that the perpetrator explains in simple terms - nine out of ten cannot.**

one case this year relates to a new course where no less than three massive complete fertiliser applications had been given by mid March!, because the first two "didn't work". This chase after colour cannot be too highly condemned. We play golf on





Jim Arthur

After all I am merely echoing the tenets of sound traditional greenkeeping which were old fashioned when I was first taught them 53 years ago. My mentor was Richard Libbey, the senior advisor, who was a botanist of international renown. When I was first appointed, their Director gave me three pieces of advice. First, my pre-war agricultural degree was useless and I had to reverse everything I had been taught on the principle of "ask a farmer what to do and go and do the opposite". Secondly, I was told to stick to grass and avoid architecture as "I would never be a good enough golfer to rank with the best and my agronomic advice could be compromised". Thirdly, (and even on a short acquaintance he realised it would be a severe hardship), "I was to go round for the first year being trained by Richard and I was to keep my mouth shut and my ears open."

Long advisory tours with Richard gave me a wonderful education - peering, probing and digging into turf

**I have maintained for more years than I care to remember, that golf clubs should buy very little fertiliser (and then nitrogen-only)**

by day and listening and discussing what we had seen in small, inexpensive (but licensed!) hostels in the evenings. It was an unrivalled way of learning about grasses - and weeds, pests and diseases - as well as people - based on botany not chemistry. It was Richard who taught me, with proof, that golfing turf never needs phosphates in fertiliser form and proved it, though we had many differences of opinion with Bingley's Director and its soil chemist.

**Our courses also have to stand up to heavy play and picture-postcard Augusta is probably the most under-played course in the world**

The other person, also a Scot, was Frank Smith - Superintendent of the Bingley plots, previously Head Greenkeeper at Cruden Bay, which was before the war the Gleneagles of North Scotland. His quiet advice and helpful practical tips were invaluable to me - and to many Bingley advisers who came after me - and stopped me from many beginner's mistakes. It was he who said, "Listen to the head man, but if he isn't talking, find out why, for without him on your side you and the Club are wasting your time and their money."

I have always tried to make a personal friend of my 'oppo' in the team, not just for politic reasons but for shared enthusiasms and many of the friendships of those days have survived 'retirement' and many is the welcome call I still receive from such elder statesmen.

However, I found that even the most died-in-the-wool, 'feed and water' enthusiasts have nearly always special interests in which I could share - botanical or ornithological in many cases - and once that mutual interest was shared we could develop amicable discussions and then agreement on greenkeeping principles.

I have always tried never to act as a surrogate Head Greenkeeper, although in the run-up to Turnberry's first Open and in the absence of trained staff, I had to guide on the basis of monthly visits for three years a dear old friend, Jim McCubbin. We made a good team and the results justified the means, backed generously by both cash and faith on the part of British Transport Hotels' Directors.

I have not got the space to cover these time-honoured basic principles in detail, but if anyone is anxious to learn then I suggest getting hold of a copy of Practical Greenkeeping - commissioned by the R&A and representing the

knowledge of many acknowledged experts in their specialised work.

Alternatively send for a 28-page folder of relevant articles and references which can be obtained (as can the book) from BIGGA HOUSE, for the princely sum of £2.50 to cover postage.

The basic principles of traditional greenkeeping hinge on copying the conditions in those areas where bents and fescues naturally dominate the turf.

Such areas are so diverse and seem to have nothing in common, yet there must be common factors. Clearly it is nothing to do with acidity or alkalinity as the same grasses thrive equally on acid moors and heathland as on alkaline dunes and downland. It is nothing to do with soil types which range from extremely sandy links and heaths, to heavy clays of old parkland and neglected pastures. It is nothing to do with soil moisture; there can hardly be a greater contrast between tidally flooded meadows and arid sandy links, yet the same species occur on both.

A little 'research' shows that the common factors are very low 'chemical' fertility coupled with free drainage and related absence of compaction, encouraging deep rooting species which are also our finest textured grasses.

Alter these conditions, deliberately or accidentally, by compaction or fertiliser treatment, and the grasses we want are penalised and in come our old enemy, *Poa annua*. In brief, the two main causes of its invasion and dominance are inadequate or too shallow aeration and above all phosphatic fertilisers. There is no possible argument against this tenet - with research references going back to 1913. Some fertiliser firms have accepted this for many decades and sell an 8:0:0 organic/inorganic nitrogen-only mix which is used by virtually all our



With Scott  
the s

**The two main causes of Poa Annuua invasion and dominance are inadequate or too shallow aeration and above all phosphatic fertilisers**

best traditional courses - very sparingly!

Even before the 1914-18 war, Poa annua was synonymous with poorer turf in the eyes of greenkeepers and research scientists alike (Dr. Murray 1913). Today, however, there are too many voices which excuse or even praise this enemy Number One - either claiming it is inevitable, or because, as with Tour Professionals, they never play in this country when Poa is at its worst - and get presented with tarted-up putting surfaces for their big day - and never see or care what happens to those greens a few months (or weeks) later.

Let there be no question - annual meadow grass is the source of 90% of all greenkeeping problems and is an extremely expensive grass to maintain, and is tolerable only in the peak growing periods when its rapid recovery from damage and in response to fertilisers and water make it possible to produce good if slow putting conditions - for six to seven months a year.

The grasses which produce (on much smaller budgets) good conditions all year round for golf are the bents and fescues. Therefore we need to know how to encourage them. Many greenkeepers over the years have succeeded. It is therefore depressing to hear speakers at seminars either extolling its virtues or saying Poa dominance is inevitable. It is reprehensible because this unquestionably is confusing to younger greenkeepers, plagued as they are by unqualified salesmen some of whom, if told the truth, would conveniently forget it to make a sale.

Equally depressing is the number of greenkeepers at all levels who maintain that however wrong they may be, their members (new golfers) have to be given the nice and green lush turf that attracted them to golf in the first place the Augusta syndrome. Such heretics forget that golf is an all year round game (Augusta is open

perhaps four and a half months a year). Our courses also have to stand up to heavy play and picture-postcard Augusta is probably the most underplayed course in the world. Finally, the budget to produce such visual 'delights' is enormous, with money, manpower, machinery and materials wildly beyond the means of 99.9% of U.K. courses.

Once you start on the slippery slope, one cost leads to another. Excessive fertilisers lead to increasingly ineffective and hugely expensive fungicidal treatments. Our best courses use minuscule amounts of nitrogenous fertiliser and virtually no fungicides.

Above all else, we must combat the insidious dual evils of misplaced commercialism and apathy. Those who care for traditional standards tight lies; plenty of run on the ball; firm, fast greens - and abhor target golf, must put their heads above the parapet. Do not be afraid of being criticised; your reward will come, though perhaps not in this world.

Stand up and be counted and join the swelling ranks - both side of the Atlantic - for the 'bump and run game' and counter the ranks of misplaced commercialism - even those most eloquent in favour of feeding have not the slightest idea that they are completely wrong.

Do not let dodgy speakers get away with misrepresentation, whether caused by ignorance or cupidity. Stand up and argue your case. Demand more audience participation time in seminars. Good speakers on sound ground welcome such interventions - at least it shows that their audiences have not been put to sleep. Remember the speakers' adage: "Repertoire needs to be rehearsed!"

Fight for our traditions and rout the target golf, summer-only school.

If you are presented with technobabble, demand that the perpetrator explains in simple terms - nine out of ten cannot. Do not spare the miscreants!

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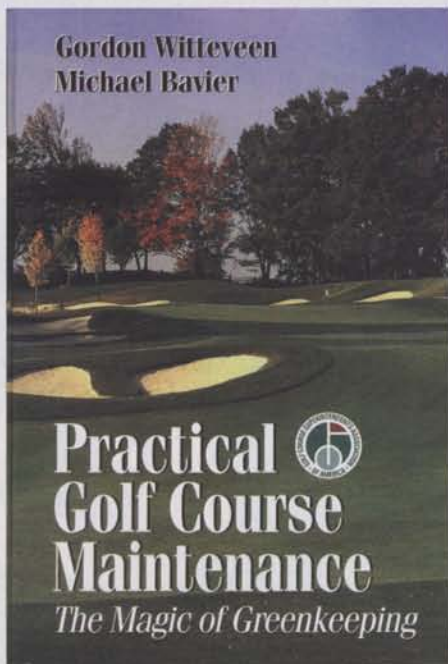




**Practical Golf Course Maintenance**

# THE MAGIC of Greenkeeping

By Gordon Witteveen and Michael Bavier



I was very fortunate to attend a one day seminar in 1997 called "The Magic Of Greenkeeping" Gordon & Michael gave. An insightful & candid portrayal of what ingredients make a successful superintendent, delivered with great verve & panache in a Morcombe & Wise style of humour ensuring those attending did not nod off in the process.

I can think of no greater achievement for any person who has dedicated their life to one profession than to communicate their wealth of experience through the publishing of a book. What is a surprise is the fact that they dedicate this book to their Green Chairmen. This in itself speaks volumes of where their personal success

lies, not just in sound agronomy but in communication with those golfers on the front line.

Through careful nurturing of their contact with club members they gained genuine support, trust & respect for their knowledge in the art of greenkeeping. We all thrive in our positions when we are a valued member of the team which Gordon and Michael certainly achieved. This book goes into detail about all aspects of turf management which, professionally integrated, will lead to success in this business of golf.

Its general aim is to give renewed vigour and enthusiasm for a profession which has countless pitfalls for those who do not tread carefully. After the last two winters we have endured we can all do with an intellectual "pick me up". They cover the rudimentary elements of greenkeeping, making this book a sort of Lonely Planet guide for greenkeepers, espousing what budding or experienced greenkeepers really need to know.

The emphasis on practical matters in turf management is excellent. Any greenkeeper will find something useful within these pages. Practical experience is only gained through hard, dedicated work. It takes several years to accrue such skills. The best of these is the "sixth sense" which prods the mind into seeing some form of action is required for the greenkeeping matter at hand. This book goes a long way to exposing the important facets which over time help to form this sixth sense. The many common sense ideas will be most interesting to those greenkeepers or students with limited experience. Items covered are clear, concise & of great benefit to younger greenkeepers studying for their N.V.Q Levels 2 & 3. They often quote maintenance or management techniques used by associate Superintendents so a cross reference of experience is succinctly highlighted for your attention. Those Course Managers with many years experience will revel in the accuracy of problem solving & more importantly - prevention of the pitfalls & will no doubt evaluate these against your own practical methodology. Another important area covered in detail throughout the various sections of the

book is the restoration of turf from a poor to healthy state with years of good practical husbandry coming to the fore.

In case you are concerned that this book, written by two American/Canadian Superintendents, will only be useful to American style Greenkeeping - forget it! This is a foray into global greenkeeping skills and there is plenty here for the European greenkeeper. This book is a fine addition to any turf managers library. It should be read by all those seeking new ideas or to support & salute other superintendents achievements on ways in which this increasingly complex and competitive world of golf can be nurtured with stress-free success

Sleeping Bear Press, Michigan,  
 1998, ISBN: 1-57504-047-6.  
 254pp - b/w Photos, Hardback.



Book reviewed by David Winterton, O.N.D., C.M.S., M.G.



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For further information Tel 001 800 984 2255.

## Stihl launch new backpack brushcutter

Specially designed for ground maintenance in inaccessible areas, the new FR85 backpack brushcutter from Andreas Stihl is ideal for work on steep embankments, overgrown slopes, in narrow ditches and in confined areas.

Its low weight and reduced vibration levels, a newly developed carrying frame and the flexible connection between the power unit and the shaft allow the operator to work uphill without tiring. It can be fitted with a variety of cutting tools from nylon mowing heads to brush knives, making it easy to cut

and clear grass, scrub, bushes and saplings. Extra flexibility is offered by the in that it can also be converted into a telescopic pruner or hedgetrimmer using one of several new attachments now available.

All engine functions can be controlled via the right-hand multi-function handle, ensuring that they are firmly under control at all times.

The Stihl FR85 backpack brushcutter will retail at £395 ex VAT.

Further information or a free brochure can be obtained by calling Freephone 0800 137574.



## Greens Groomer sweeps up

The new Greensward Engineering 6' wide Greens Groomer attachment quickly fits behind almost any power unit and will handle a wide range of greens maintenance tasks.

It can be used for regular brushing and grooming to stand up the grass before mowing and to control grain, and is also exceptionally effective for rubbing in topdressing due to its patented multi brush design which moves the sand three ways to gently rub it in and fill aeration holes without scuffing or bruising the turf.

It can even be fitted directly behind a truckster mounted topdresser to apply and rub in topdressing in a single pass.

A 17' wide triple gang version is ideal for brushing fairways to remove worm casts and dew for improved early morning play.

For further information Tel: 0113 267 6000.

## New moisture meter from Dynamax

Dynamax Inc, of Texas, USA, has launched the TH20 Theta Moisture Meter, to measure volumetric soil moisture content. It combines ease of use and accuracy with low cost, to give access to precise soil moisture data.

The probe is reliable, even in saline soils, and its compact size means minimal soil disturbance.

The sensor sends microwave signals and amplifies a reflected signal dependent on the dielectric constant (theta), a precise electronic parameter for the volume of water in soil (plus or minus 2% accuracy).

TH20 is simple to use: the probe is inserted into the soil and when pushing the button then the LCD shows the volume of water in soil as a decimal value.

The palm-sized, battery powered, display device provides instantaneous readings for mineral or organic soils, which may be selected by a slide switch on the front panel.

For further information Tel: 001 281 564 5100

