

## COLLEGE COLLECTS



Elmwood College's Andrew Mellon (left), with Toro's Brad Hamilton (right), and Barry Beckett (centre)

Toro recently presented internationally recognised golf studies Centre of Excellence Elmwood College with a cheque for \$80,000 courtesy of its Giving Programme.

Part of the company's ongoing commitment to benefiting education, the environment, the arts, and health and human services, the donation was made to the college, which is located close to St Andrews Golf Club in Fife, Scotland, recently. Toro's Brad Hamilton, Director of Marketing, Commercial and Irrigation Products, and Barry Beckett, Senior Marketing Manager of Commercial Products, jetted in from the company's HQ in the States to present the cheque to Elmwood's Course Manager, Andrew Mellon, who accepted the funding on behalf of the college.

"This new development will enable us to develop our expertise in web and graphics design, taking the course materials to a whole new level of quality while helping to realise the college's vision to be a world-class Centre of Excellence for golf education. This is a fantastic opportunity for both Elmwood and Toro to continue to lead and develop new initiatives that will benefit the whole industry. We are very grateful for the support and assistance The Toro Company has given Elmwood over the years," said Carol Borthwick, the college's Director of Golf and International Affairs.

## KEVIN JOINS SHARPES

Sharpes Leisure are pleased to announce a new appointment to its new sales team within their Seoul Nassau Golf division, Kevin Hodges joins the company as Area Sales Manager for Scotland. Kevin is a former Greenkeeper and Secretary of the East of Scotland Section of BIGGA.

Kevin brings a wealth of experience to the company. "I am delighted to be joining Seoul Nassau and be part of its exciting growth plans" said Kevin.

Scott Lucas, Sales Director, said "We welcome Kevin to our team and I am sure he will prove to be a big success with Scottish customers."

"We now have a team that consists of 13 salesmen and gives us virtually total UK coverage, such an investment is indicative of our attitude towards the future, we are determined to stay at the top with quality product, service and support."

## DOUGLAS JOINS A-PLANT

A-Plant has appointed Douglas McLuckie as the company's new Director of Environment, Health and Safety and Performance Standards. This new appointment reflects the increasing focus at A-Plant on improving safety standards in construction and the many other industries served by the company.

With a career including 24 years within the Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) sector, Douglas is very experienced in this area of the market. Highly qualified, with a Masters Degree in Environmental Management, Douglas previously worked for the Laird Group plc, where he was responsible for Global Strategic Environment, Health and Safety Risk and worked extensively in the Far East, Europe and North America.

Commenting on his new appointment, Douglas said: "There is an increased focus on EHS within the construction industry and I am pleased to have joined A-Plant to assist with the company's response and developments in light of current and future Safety and Environmental issues."

## SISIS IN SCOTLAND

Sisis Equipment (Macclesfield) are pleased to announce the sales and after-sales operation for the whole of Scotland will be handled by Shaun Reilly. Customers in Scotland will already know Shaun, who has been a Territory Manager for several years.

Customers will continue to contact Sisis or Shaun directly for machinery and spare parts, in keeping with the company direct sales policy, but will now be able to enjoy full service and maintenance via Shaun's company 3PointPower. Shaun will benefit from our full support in this new venture and we wish him every success.

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER? - PARTRIDGE JOINS SWAN

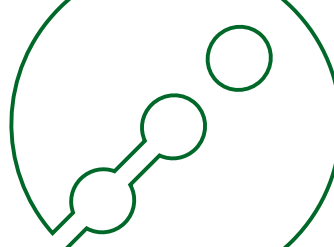
Swan Golf Designs' ranks have recently been supplemented by the arrival of David Partridge, an advanced PGA professional and a Graduate of the Diploma Programme of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects.

David quit his playing career and joined Howard Swan's team of professional golf course architects last month and will contribute to SGD's work, currently on five continents and in close to 30 countries from Iceland to South Africa, from South America to the Far East.

"It's a great opportunity for me to work with Howard and the rest of the team at Swan Golf Designs. I'm looking forward to using the experience I've gained from 18 years as a professional golfer. This knowledge gleaned from playing many of the best layouts in the world has added to that which I've gained through teaching golfers of all abilities over the years will be an asset to the Practice, whether designing new courses or improving existing ones," said David.

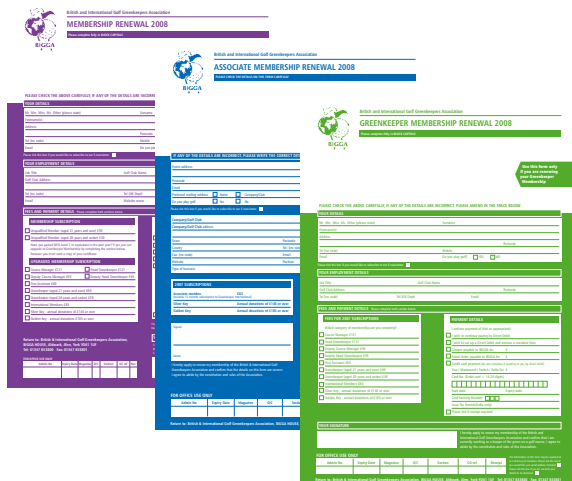
He will begin his design work with SGD assisting at Kingswood Golf Club and at Silvermere Golf and Leisure, both in Surrey, and owned and operated by Tom Hilliard's Group.

# Membership



## AN UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Time's running away. We are still waiting for a few December and January renewals so don't forget to send them in as soon as possible or you will no longer be entitled to your BIGGA Benefits.



If you've lost your renewal form just ring us and we'll send you a new one. Or you can now download renewal forms on the BIGGA website.



If you don't want to pay your subscription fee all in one go you can pay us in five or ten instalments by Direct Debit. If you want a Direct Debit Instruction form get in touch with us on 01347 833800.

Don't forget that if you are paying your own BIGGA Membership subscription fees you can apply to the tax office for a refund of 23% of the subscription amount. This can also be backdated.

For those of you retiring or leaving the trade, you can still be a part of BIGGA. There are many different types of memberships that we can offer you.

For retiring Greenkeepers BIGGA has a Retired Membership with full benefits or a Retired Membership with limited benefits. Just give us a call for more information.

If you are leaving the Greenkeeping profession why not join BIGGA as an associate member so you can still be a part of the Association.

For more information on any of the above you can give us a call on 01347 833800.

## BIGGA WELCOMES

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# Learning & Development

## Key Sponsorship:

### UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREENKEEPERS

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

Many young greenkeepers owe their career progression to the assistance they've had from the Learning and Development Fund. An equal number of established greenkeepers have also been able to access the fund to continue their professional development thanks to the donations of the Gold and Silver Key Sponsors.

### THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING KEY SPONSORS



#### GOLDEN KEY



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JH Fry; JH Greasley; WJ Rogers; Chris Yeaman; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Bruce Cruickshank; Frank Newberry; Andrew Cornes; Christopher Lomas MG.



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### SAMI COLLINS, HEAD OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES AN UPDATE



I can't believe that it is March already - this year is really flying by. Before we know it we'll be Christmas shopping again!

The time has finally come to knuckle down and get on with the day-to-day issues that concern the Learning and Development Department and to catch up with all the administration that goes on hold during the preparations for Harrogate Week.

Rachael is getting to grips with running the Continuing Professional Development scheme and she is about to be introduced to the administration of the Master Greenkeeper Certificate. In the meantime I'll be concentrating on management training, Continue to Learn 2009 as well as a whole host of other new and ongoing projects.

#### The Toro Student of the Year 2008



Following a very successful Competition in 2007 that saw Avon Bridges selected as the Winner with Lewis Birch and Simon Lambert as Runners Up, Toro are continuing to support the competition that will celebrate its 20th

Anniversary this year.

To enter the competition, Students must be nominated by their tutor and be able to attend a Regional Interview that will take place during the week commencing Monday 30 June. The closing date for entries is Friday, May 2. The National Final will take place at BIGGA House on September 15.

Details of the competition and entry forms will be sent out to Training Providers during this month. Application forms can also be downloaded from the Education area of the BIGGA website.

#### The BIGGA Training & Development Manual



JOHN DEERE

The BIGGA Training & Development Manual, sponsored by John Deere, is an online resource that provides users with the information they need on recruitment, induction, training and career progression using video clips, written information, downloadable documents and useful web links.

Designed around a theme of 18 holes, users can gain access via the 'sub-text' tab to training records, job specifications, job descriptions, sample contracts of employment, appraisal forms and details of continuing development.

A valuable membership benefit, the manual can be accessed via the BIGGA website on the Education, Jobs' and Members' areas. Simply log in using your surname and BIGGA membership number on the Home page.

#### Continue to Learn 2009

Planning has already begun for Continue to Learn 2009. Please feel free to put forward suggestions of topics for seminars, workshops and discussion panels. Any ideas you have will be welcomed and considered for 2009 and beyond.

Submit your suggestion by emailing me, [sami@bigga.co.uk](mailto:sami@bigga.co.uk).

# Learning & Development

## WASTE MANAGEMENT ON GOLF COURSES

By Mary Purcell

**Waste management is the new environmental hot topic. We all produce waste and we all have the responsibility to manage waste in a sustainable manner. The rate of waste generation is increasing and existing waste disposal sites are reaching the end of their useful lifetime.**

Economic growth during the last decade has stimulated greater consumption throughout society and has created a 'throw-away' culture.

Recently, public awareness and expectation of a clean and green environment is high, be it on the streets or at the golf club. The overall management plan of the golf course should have waste management high on the list of priorities.

Waste prevention and minimisation require Course Managers and greenkeepers to make small, but significant behavioral or operational changes. Simple changes like on-site composting can benefit the environment greatly. Of course, the possible waste disposal solutions are dependent on waste composition, since the organic fraction is the main factor that determines its viability, while the fractions of paper determine the feasibility of recycling (Koufodimos and Samaras, 2002).

**REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE** – the well-known three Rs involved in optimising a waste management strategy. Reducing waste, reusing where possible and also recycling resources are all simple steps in a successful waste management plan. Recycling represents one attempt to reduce the amount of rubbish being buried in landfills. Source reduction, resource recovery and waste disposal should be considered when planning a waste management programme. EU policy, most recently published in the Sixth Environment Action Programme, stressed the importance of preventing and recycling waste. It also clearly identifies a need to decouple waste generation from economic activity and to reduce waste volumes (EPA, 2004).

Waste management techniques - Some simple steps to improve the current waste management system on a golf course can include the following:

- Leave clippings (grass and other organic materials) in place
- Dispose of chemicals in a responsible manner
- Avoid purchasing products with excess packaging
- Make a real effort to recycle
- Buy recycled products
- Avoid over-purchasing
- Allow for naturalised areas to be created on the course (eg, wildflower meadows)
- Onsite composting
- Onsite mulching
- Dispose of non-recyclables in an environmentally-sensitive manner

Grass clippings and other materials such as prunings and dead branches can be left in place where agronomically possible. Grass clippings, on areas that are not required to be as manicured, can be left where they fall. This reduces the amount of waste being generated, allows nutrients to be returned to the ground and also cuts down on work. If the clippings are going to be removed, then it is best to compost them or use them as mulching.

Disposing of any chemicals on the course in a responsible manner is of utmost importance. All chemicals should be disposed of according to the label and extreme care must be taken to ensure no chemicals enter waterbodies or leach into the soil. Also, care needs to be taken so that they chemicals are not left around the course for susceptible wildlife to come in contact with. Any batteries or used oil should be recycled or disposed of responsibly. It is also important to make an effort to recycle and buy recycled products.

Recycling office paper, scorecards, etc, is an easy behavioural step that can be taken and also ordering recycled products is important. Buying recycled products helps drive the recycle market and not just flood it with products to be recycled. Also good management in purchasing or ordering goods for the course can help reduce waste from unwanted or unused products. It is important to ensure the non-recyclable waste from the course is collected by a reputable collector and not from 'the man in the van'. All too often, the waste collected by 'the man in the van' is fly tipped in rural locations.

Allowing for or creating naturalised areas or increasing the amount of areas left for nature and increasing the size or amount of bufferzones (no-spray zones) not only increases the habitat value of golf courses but also decreases the inputs required for management, therefore minimising waste generated.

Composting - will reduce the waste being sent to landfill. Top quality compost can easily be made from general garden waste. Leaves, grass clippings and vegetation trimmings are suitable for composting. Compost has the potential to act as a soil/sand improver. It is beneficial to micro-organisms, which improve soil structure and act as a slow release fertiliser on the course. In principle, it presents an ideal solution to the challenge of turning organic waste into a valuable product. There are many benefits which composting has to offer on a golf course:

- Viable means to remove permanently the organic material fraction from the waste stream.
- Reduces the amount of waste collected, thereby minimising the environmental impacts and costs associated with managing organic waste.

- Composting of organic wastes at or near the point of production will result in reduced transportation and energy costs, along with saving landfill space.
- Nutrients are returned to the soil, aiding the cycle of nutrients.

**THE COMPOSTING PROCESS** - Compost is made by employing accelerated simulation of a soil process (decomposition), where decomposer organisms carry out their role in global cycling of carbon and plant nutrients. On a golf course, one of the major products to be composted will be grass. Grass has a high odour potential because of the ease at which it becomes anaerobic. So piles need to be managed properly.

Piles will need periodic turning for aeration and watering to add moisture if the compost dries out too much. The optimum moisture content is about 40% to 60%, in my opinion. Moisture content can be increased by spraying a compost heap with water, and can be decreased by adding dry straw/sawdust. The ratio of green to brown material is also important for the Carbon:Nitrogen ratio (optimal at 30/20:1). The C:N is perhaps, the most important factor that requires attention with respect to the nutritional needs of the microbes active in composting. A large percentage of the carbon is oxidised to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) by the microbes in their metabolic activities. Once the composting process has stabilised, the material can be used as a soil improver.

Mulching - of branches and wood, which are not being left in place for conservation reasons (e.g. safety, excess fallen wood) is ideal for mulching on site for use on the course. Onsite mulching has many benefits including:

- Mulch conserves moisture
- Prevents weeds
- Adds organic matter to the soil

Conserving water in the soil is very beneficial to a course. It reduces the amount of irrigation required. Mulch also prevents weeds from emerging and therefore reduces the need for labour (manual removal, herbicide spot applications) and thus saves money. An onsite shredder is a good investment.

**HAZARDOUS WASTES** - It is important to handle, store and dispose of hazardous wastes properly according to the label/laws. Storage areas for hazardous wastes should be secure and not accessible to susceptible wildlife. Containers should be in good condition to avoid leaks and labelled and dated clearly. Hazardous wastes on a golf course include: Course care products (pesticides, herbicides); Ignitable waste (petrol, diesel, paint, parts maintenance products); Waste oil; Batteries; Solvents.

**LITTER** - on a course is unsightly. Bins should be provided on the course and where possible separate bins should be made available for recyclables. Golfers and visitors should be educated on their importance. Signs reminding golfers to bring home litter or even pick it up can prove very successful. It lets people know the course is managed with waste taken into account.

**WATER CONSERVATION** - The management of water can be listed under waste management. Water is a valuable resource and should be managed carefully. Simple actions can help in reducing water misuse on the course:

- Rainwater collection for watering grounds

- Install low flow devices
- Maximise native species on the course
- Use water at appropriate times
- Maximise irrigation systems and management – precise efficiency

Reusing rain water for irrigation can help reduce the amount of water used on the course. Installing low-flow devices enhances the use of water. Planting native species means they will require less water than plants which are not native to the area.. Irrigation patterns should be suitable to the environmental conditions and ensuring irrigation is not used during times where evaporation is high is important in reducing the amount used. Irrigation systems should be inspected regularly (GCSAA, 2007) to ensure they are in good repair i.e. no leaks.

Make golfers aware - I realise Course Managers and greenkeepers are already over-burdened in many instances and managing all aspects of waste may seem a very thankless job. I would highly recommend, if one is serious about reducing and carefully managing waste, that golfers and the local community are made aware of all efforts that are being made to protect the environment and manage the course in a sustainable way. Greenkeepers are, at the end of the day, in charge of vast tracks of land and it is vital that the community at large realises Course Managers are playing their part in protecting it. Publicity could be as simple as placing notices around the course or in the clubhouse, which show how the club is reducing, reusing and recycling. From experience, the general public will be very receptive to all strategies that are being implemented.

Waste management should be high on the priority list for sustainable management of a golf course. Implementing a successful waste management plan involves making informed decisions for both the tactical (day-to-day) and strategic (long-term) waste management operations specific to the course. The waste management plan should be monitored periodically to optimise it. Constant thinking and improvement of existing strategies will lead to a more rational and efficient waste management system

Mary Purcell is currently carrying out research for a doctorate degree in Environmental Science at University College Dublin, For more information contact Mary at [mary.purcell@ucd.ie](mailto:mary.purcell@ucd.ie)

## REFERENCES

EPA (2004) National Waste Prevention Programme, Outline work plan 2004 – 2008. Environmental Protection Agency, Johnstown Castle, Wexford, Ireland.

GCSAA (2007) The environmental principles for golf courses in the United States. [www.gcsaa.org/resources/facts/principles.asp](http://www.gcsaa.org/resources/facts/principles.asp)

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**Count on it.**

# SPREADING EQUIPMENT: SPREAD YOUR DRESSINGS EVENLY

By James de Havilland

**When looking to buy a new top dresser, typical considerations will include choosing between a tractor or vehicle mounted designs, and trailed spreaders with or without their own integrated power pack. Once the ideal capacity has been established, the selection job may seem easy. But there are numerous other points to consider.**

For what appears on the surface to be a really simple bit of kit, modern top dresser designs have enough design variation within them to make selecting the right one perhaps more involved than it may at first appear. As an example, some options can allow a machine to be swapped between direct drop to spreading via spinning discs. Several higher capacity trailed machines can be readily converted into a bulk loader, the addition of a rear conveyor allowing them to discharge directly into a smaller spreader, trailer, a bunker or even into a heap or windrow on the ground.

On trailed models, the variety of wheel and tyre options to consider varies; some designs favour a relatively narrow track but with wheels across the width of the dresser body. Others adopt wide flotation rubber with an outer edge well beyond the width of the hopper.

On smaller models, both mounted and trailed, there may be a choice of an integrated power unit. These 'self-contained' models can often be used in conjunction with equipment that would otherwise not have the power, hydraulic flow or PTO to drive a spreader but otherwise be ideally suited to top dressing and spreading duties.

There is then a choice between those designs with simple full width hopper and discharge systems. Simple to use and set up, it is easy to match each bout pass with this type of kit. As spread widths increase beyond the unit's width, productivity will climb. So will the need to match each pass to ensure spread accuracy. The appeal of a machine that can spread material to 8, 10, 12 or even 16m needs to be countered by the ability to accurately match bouts at these widths.

Next up are hopper capacities. It is all too easy to assume that a large trailed top dresser will be too big. A key issue is that there are no rules to say a nominal 3.0m<sup>3</sup> capacity machine needs to be fully loaded. Loaded with 1.0m<sup>3</sup> of material, a 'big' top dresser may offer a footprint that is less than a smaller machine with the same load on board.

This brings in the issue of tyre types and inflation pressures. Without getting into the complex territory of how much load a tyre can take at a certain pressure, a simple guide is that a tyre inflated to a given pressure should impart much the same pressure to the ground.

A bit of an over simplification, perhaps, but what this can mean is a big trailed spreader and tractor combination running on tyres inflated to 0.5 bar may well exert less pressure on the ground than a buggy with its rear tyres blown up to 3.5 bar to enable it to take a fully loaded mounted spreader.

If you are looking for a new top dresser, you have a huge choice. Entry level direct drop tractor mounted models with a 3.5m<sup>3</sup> body and a nominal spread width of 1.5m will retail from under £5,000, utility vehicle equivalents listing between £6,500 and £7,500.

Spinning disc broadcast spreaders occupy a diverse range of machines, those designed to fit a utility vehicle retailing from £7,500 for a top specification machine. When it comes to trailed models, prices may well start at under £6,000 to large trailed units costing over £20K. It is pretty obvious that there is a huge choice of designs to consider.

To help, it can be useful to set out a few pre-purchase demands and preferences. These can include:

- Tractor or utility mounted versus trailed
- Vehicle driven or fitted with own power pack
- Direct drop or broadcast – or both
- Ability to spread range of top dressings
- Application rates and hopper capacity
- Versatility. Fertiliser as well as top dressing?
- Tyres sizes and inflation pressures
- Compatibility with existing equipment
- Projected workload
- Additional options offered to improve versatility
- Ease of operation and setting up
- Fitting and removal from tractor or vehicle
- Local support and budget

A top dresser may be simple, but these machines do differ in so many ways. It is the small details that can really help make one machine more suited to individual needs than others. Knowing what is needed is the first step in selecting the best tool for the job.

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Head Greenkeeper

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**QUICK TIPS TO HELP SPREADING EASIER:**

Spreading wet material. Some dressings may bridge within the hopper when wet. A simple check is to see if 'tunnels' can be pushed into the heap before loading. To help, load the hopper so the dressing is broken up as it is dropped into the body. Avoid overloading and keep transport speeds down. This will help reduce the load compacting upon itself in transit.

Keep the spinners spinning. Always start the spinners on broadcast models running before the floor conveyor. When shutting off, allow the spinners to run to clear of any material that may continue to fall from the conveyor.

Check material consistency. Variations between top dressing batches can influence how the material spreads. Check that the material is spread to the desired width and adjust as necessary.



Campey Turfcare Systems established the Dakota 'Turf Tender' top dresser range in the UK, with mounted and trailed units spanning 0.65m<sup>3</sup> to 3.82 m<sup>3</sup>. Spinning disc models spread up to 10m, the Dakota set-up system making these machines popular with operators. As with all types, the choice of model will need to be related to the machine's intended applications and the equipment that will operate it.



Lloyds has expanded its previously three-model range to include the '6 cubic yard' Pequea Turf FX650 which will be supplied to order and a smaller 'half ton' GT-50 model below the existing GT-100. The smaller models come in trailed or mounted versions with the choice of an integral power pack. The latter has now been upgraded to enable it to cope with the heaviest of dressing materials. As with most suppliers, Lloyds can offer a range of options to suit specific needs, including a discharge conveyor for bulk handling applications.



The design of top dressing equipment may be similar in outline but not in detail. The Pro-Cast PC3 from Sportsground Machinery drives its discs via hydraulically powered shafts. This keeps the hydraulic motors well out of the way of spread material. Spread width and patterns will vary according to the quality and quantity of top dressing applied, but a model like this is versatile; it will cope with large volumes of materials but will also spread light and thin if required.



Taking a side by side look at Rink top dressers from Charterhouse Turf Machinery shows how the designs offer different approaches to wheel and tyre positioning. It can be wrong to assume a smaller and lighter machine will always have a lighter footprint. Mounted Rink models start at 1.0m<sup>3</sup> capacity and spread to 1.5m, the large 3.8m<sup>3</sup> DS3800 on the left offering spread widths from 2.0 to 15.0m. Material can be applied to a thickness of between 0.5 to 15mm.



Distributed in the UK by Turfmeh Machinery, the TYCROP ProPass 180 ultra low impact broadcast top dresser can be used as a large-area top dresser fitted with twin rear spinning discs or, with these removed and the optional swivelling cross conveyor fitted, used as a bulk loader for filling trailers or greens top dressers, bunker filling, tee construction and path resurfacing. The conveyor measuring 203mm (8in) wide by 1.65m (65in) long and will through an arc of 180 degrees. All Tycrop models feature a simplified instructions to adjust application rates



**SUPPLIER LIST**

The following is a guide only and may not include all companies that produce or sell top dressing equipment. Fertiliser broadcasting equipment suppliers are not listed.

- Campey Turfcare Systems
- Charterhouse Turf Machinery Ltd
- John Deere Ltd
- Lloyds & Co Letchworth Ltd
- Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd
- Sisis Equipment (Macclesfield) Ltd
- Sportsgrounds Machinery
- Toro Commercial Products
- Trilo UK Ltd
- Turfmech Machinery Ltd
- Ultra Spreader International
- Wiedenmann (UK) Ltd



'Full width' top dressers, such as the Toro Top Dresser, come in trailed and mounted variants, the former in its trailed 2500 version offering the flexibility to be used behind a range of machines. An even spread and easy bout marking are key advantages of this type of kit, with a potentially reduced risk of material bridging in the hopper; the top dressing has a shorter distance to travel to the point of discharge. The 0.70m<sup>3</sup> Toro can be towed at speeds of up to 13kph, its ground drive system making it simple to maintain and switch between vehicles.



There is no fixed top dresser design rule book. Although the machines on offer fall into broadly similar groups, subtle design differences can make a given model a better choice for some applications. The key is to establish what is expected of the machine and checking it can deliver.



Versatility is a key to making the best use of equipment, the Turfco CR-10 from Ransomes Jacobsen not only offering spread widths from 4.6 to 12.2m but also the ability to bulk transport material from its 3.1m<sup>3</sup> capacity hopper. Unlike a tipping trailer, the use of a conveyor to discharge material helps spread it and also allows the material to be discharged without compromising the edge of a bunker.



Although top dressing kit can be used to spread fertiliser, a simple ground driven broadcaster can sometimes make life easier, simply because it can be set up to apply a fixed application fertiliser rate and not need the settings on the main top dressing kit to be adjusted. A little bit of lateral thinking can save time and money.



The new pond beside the 18th green

# DONE TO A TEE

*Scott MacCallum visits Teesside Golf Club and meets a man who isn't in danger of letting the grass grow under his feet*

**Teesside Golf Club has seen, and been through, some remarkable changes over the last quarter of a century and one man has been at the forefront of them all.**

Tony Smith arrived as Head Greenkeeper in 1982 and he certainly hasn't been one to sit back and let the mundane greenkeeping chores fill his days – he's pushed himself, his team, and often the club itself, to greater heights.

"No-one would argue that we're the most improved club in the north east," said a proud Tony, as he sat in the club's dining room overlooking the subject of his labours.

Let's just list some of the developments at the club since then – purchasing the club after the racecourse with which it shared land went bust; planting 31,000 trees; opening an official tip and then having the tipping trucks create six metre high, many metre wide, mounding to shelter the course from the nearby roads and industrial trading estate; building ponds and filling in many of the becks which criss crossed the course.

Even given the fact that there has been a significant amount of time in which to fit in the work the grass hasn't been allowed to grow under the collective feet of Teesside Golf Club.

But it was a very difficult time when Tony arrived at the club from Cleveland Golf Club, Yorkshire's only true links, having started his greenkeeping career at Abbeydale Golf Club, in Sheffield.

Teesside shared its land with Stockton Racecourse with eight holes inside the oval track and 10 outside, but within a month of Tony arriving the racecourse had gone bust.

"I only ever saw one race around the track," explained Tony, who added that they used to halt all golf while the race meeting was on.

The implications for the club of the Racecourse going bust were wide-ranging.

"We paid rent to the Racecourse, before it was taken over by the receivers, and there were sealed bids to buy each plot of land – the cricket club, the football club, the golf club and the surplus land around the racecourse.

"We won the golf course bid but lost out by a small margin on some of the other land which, had we got, would have given us much more room and probably resulted in a re-routing of the course," explained Tony, adding that the developer who bought the other land immediately recouped his investment by selling the grandstand to local Football Club and having car boot sales at weekends.

However, the purchase did have a knock on effect on the maintenance of the course as each member paid a £100 levy to pay for the course, which they got back after 10 years, and fees remained static for five years meaning reduced budgets over that period.

"It meant silly little things like having to borrow a tractor for certain jobs and for the first year I used to carry tools in the back of my Land Rover to repair machines while we were out."

Teesside Golf Club is over 100 years old but we've only been able to make alterations to the course for the last 24 years. The reduced funding didn't, however, mean a halt to course improvements and, working in-house, the team began a programme of installing drainage into what was a wet golf course. So wet indeed that not so many years ago – just under 200 in fact – the River Tees ran along what is now the 18th hole.



The course had a history of flooding