JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER



Winter tasks
For most of us, the fertilising and irrigating of our greens has come to a stop, and the busy program of Club and Provincial competitions is slowing down.

This gives us the time and opportunity to carry out a number of other tasks not part of our normal busy program.

Here are some reminders.

1. Soil samples
Take a number of samples from each of your greens. Take these early in the morning, put them in a plastic bag and keep them cool while sending them off to a laboratory for analysis. Do not take these if your have applied fertilizer within the last 30 days.

Among the results you should receive are the following:

- The pH value; the ideal value for our turf grasses should be between 5.5 and 6.5
- The balance of the macronutrients (NPK) N - Nitrogen, P- Phosphates and K - Potassium
- The Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) which indicates the ability of your green's soil to retain nutrients and moisture

This feedback will allow you to rectify the situation in each case.

While removing these cores for analysis, it is worth taking note of the following:

- how thick is the thatch on top? If close to 10 mm, you will have to scarify the green quite severely during renovation
- is there compaction? Is the compaction close to the surface, or deeper down? One expects compaction in the top 25 – 40 mm because of the traffic of man and machines. If the compaction is lower down, one would have to consider hollow tining or vertidraining during your renovation period.
- Measure the length of your grass plant roots. Roots of 50 mm plus are acceptable but the longer the roots, the better the chances of the grass plant surviving any challenges.

2. Take levels
The heavy summer traffic on the green together with the heavy rains of the past few weeks will have affected your levels. Compaction in the two-metre area may also have led to severe run-off along some margins. The results of taking levels may

require you to lift or re-align your ditchboards. When the soil starts to warm up later in the year, you will be able to top dress the two metre areas to the level of the raised ditchboards.

3. Banks

For those of us who have grass banks, the season will definitely have affected our banks. Undercut or grassless sections need to be replaced. Very low banks can be built up. Later in the year, the top of the banks can be top dressed to achieve that sharp edge.

4. Ditches

Where your ditches are too narrow (less than 200 mm), this is a good time to correct by shaving the grass bank or moving the ditchboards inwards. Regardless of the width of your ditch, this may be a good time to align your ditchboards which could have moved out of line during the year. When doing this, consider sloping the ditch board inwards (at an angle between 15^0 and 30^0) towards the bank. This will provide better stability and resist the force of those bowlers who inadvertently step on the ditch board.

5. Foreign grasses

Kikuyu grass from our banks has a tendency to invade at the margins. The moist turf at this time of the year makes it slightly easier to remove the grass by weeding. If there is a large patch of foreign grass you might have to remove a number of sods and replant.

6. Rink markers

If your rinks are showing signs of wear, it may be because you have a limited number of rink positions. Quite a number of South African Clubs mark their rinks at 1.67 m intervals, giving them colours such as red, blue, green. If these rinks are moved each week, it means that it is only after three weeks, that play returns to the same rink. It is really a good way to reduce the wear and tear and the grooves that tend to form when play takes place too often on the same 5m strip.

7. Equipment

This is also a good time to arrange for your green's equipment (mowers, groomers, brushes etc) to be serviced and rink markers and numbers to be painted or replaced.

8. Planning for renovations

This is the time of year when new Management Committees are elected, and programs for Club activities such as Club competitions, all day events and business leagues are prepared for the upcoming year. In a previous newsletter we identified the optimum time to undertake renovations as being between mid-October and the end of December. It is therefore important to determine when the Club's green(s) are going to be closed for renovation, ensuring that there is not a conflict between the time necessary to complete the renovation and the green(s) availability for the Clubs planned activities.