WELCOME

WE'LL GET STARTED SOON...

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Winter maintenance

Brushing, mowing, spiking, and feeding your square and outfield through winter



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WINTER MAINTENANCE AIMS

Simply - to go into preseason in the strongest position possible.

The end of season renovation work has been completed, however, the days of "putting the square to bed" and forgetting about it until spring are long gone.

With mild and wet winters more common, growth is continuing all through the winter months, making winter maintenance an important factor in keeping both the outfield and square in good condition.

Get ahead so you aren't playing catch-up in March.



BRUSHING

Brushing the square and outfield will help to maintain grass health throughout the winter.

This can be done through multiple methods, using a drag brush or mat, or even a long cut of rope, to brush off the surface of grass. This will help to clear grass blades of dew and prevent damp conditions for bacteria and disease to thrive.

Drag brushing the grass leaf in a few directions over the winter months, will help keep the grass leaf upright, with less chances of disease forming.

- Remove dew to help prevent disease.
- Reduces debris on the surface.
- Stands the grass plant up to keep the base of the plant well oxygenated.
- Can help to reduce algae and moss formation.
- Disperse worm casts.

MOWING

Regular mowing will encourage good grass cover, and ensure that the grass-plant is not weakened in the spring by removing too much growth in a short period of time.

If you leave grass to grow too long an individual grass plant will start to out-compete its neighbour. This is difficult to see happening until you start to cut shorter and realise you have lost plants – wasting the money you spent on seed at renovation time.

Any growth over 25mm should be lowered to 20-22mm when ground conditions allow mowers to be used and foot-traffic to be carried without damage to surface levels. Never cut when it is too wet and soft as there is a risk of damage to surface levels.

Before cutting, walk the square to remove any debris or rubbish which may have accumulated to ensure that no damage will be caused to the mower.

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AERATION - SQUARE

Water, air, and roots deeper in the profile.

A square that has moisture stored at depth will produce better pitches by improving rolling, durability, pace, bounce, and consistency. The over-winter period is vital for getting water into a square.

Getting more air in will help improve soil health, encourage bacteria that break down organic matter and thatch and encourage deeper roots.

This will result in more wear-resistant plants that can dry pitches and harden them more in the summer during prep. Root depth is not the be-all and end-all of pitch performance (grass cover has a much bigger effect), but resilient plants really help maintain grass cover, and therefore pace and carry, for longer and to dry the pitch more evenly.



APPLYING FERTILISER

A typical "winter" fertiliser will be lower in nitrogen and phosphorus but higher in potassium. The potassium helps to strengthen the structure of the plant. This can be helped further with the addition of iron, which when applied as iron-sulphate can also help to control moss growth. If you are in any doubt – speak to your fertiliser supplier and always follow the label recommendations.

If you struggle with uniformity of application in a single pass you can apply your fertiliser in two doses at half target rate, at 90 degrees to each other – that way you often reach full target rate more evenly.

Avoid very dry, frosty, or windy conditions - as these often result in uneven distribution and possible scorching.



OUTFIELD – CRICKET ONLY

The outfield should ideally be kept as freely draining as possible. Aim to maintain desirable grasses, keep weed content down, and thatch layer to no more than 5 mm. If grass clipping are removed, then a fertiliser programme will need to be in place.

Maintain a grass height of 20-25 mm.
Aerate using solid and/or slit tines.
Brush if possible.
Removing leaves and boxing off clippings will help to reduce the worm population.
The effects of casting worms should be dealt with prior to mowing using either products sold for this purpose and/or via use of a drag mat or brush to disperse casts.

Remember!
Only carry out if ground conditions are suitable.
If the ground is too wet, thawing, or frozen, stay off, you will create more problems by going on it.



OUTFIELD - MULTISPORT

Regular quality mowing with well-maintained machinery to 30mm+

Weed control to ensure only desirable grasses are present in the sward.

Moss should be controlled before it becomes a problem. Moss is the symptom of poor growing conditions, not the cause of them, so good cultural practices will help to keep moss out of the sward. If moss does appear then application of iron sulphate will help to control it.

The use of approved marking materials; users can be injured by use of inappropriate materials – and it's often illegal.

After each match the pitch should be divotted. Wherever possible, the divots should be trodden back down and replaced by hand immediately the game has finished.

Hand fork any high wear areas (goalmouths, centre circle) and gently apply heave to the fork to relieve compaction.

If the area is bare carry out repairs including seeding and top-dressing with a suitable material (sports sand or sand/soil mix) to level, taking care not to smother any grass cover.

If conditions dictate, irrigate as required and cover with germination sheeting or scaffold netting if available.

Pitch rotation where possible to allow high wear areas time to repair.



OUTFIELD – RENOVATION

Encourage the club to complete a full renovation across the winter sport pitches on cricket outfields when the winter sport season is finished.

Weed control to ensure only desirable grasses are present in the sward.

Eradicate any unwanted thatch layer through scarification to the appropriate depth.

Deep tine aeration.

Overseeding with a desired ryegrass sports seed mix.

Top dressing with a minimum of 60 tons using a suitable sports sand dressing. An 80/20, 70/30 sports rootzone mix can be used within the goal month areas for added binding strength.



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