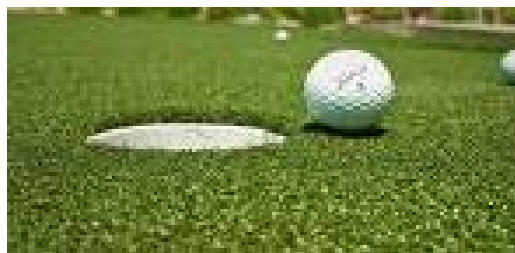


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Greens Liaison Chairman

Sandhill Golf Club



10th May 2010

Firstly may I thank everyone for their support in handing in questions. I feel that if we continue to correspond in responsible and friendly manner we will all learn a great deal about our course and what makes it tick.

Please be civil in your questions and moans, I am only trying to help. I know we all want perfect playing surfaces (I certainly do) but nature does not always do what we want and if we are going to have a sustainable golf course then we need to address what chemicals we use .

Please do not think I am against the use of chemicals as a last resort because I am not. Part of my past employment was with a large American company who deal in chemicals and fertilisers, but even they are now bending towards using biological solutions for turf. The absolutely , beautiful greens you seeing being beamed from America will become the thing of the past when legislation bans more and more of our chemicals we use to control disease. Just this week I have heard the commentators from America saying the course is not playing its best because they have had a cold winter in Florida of all places so what was our winter like, bad.

Questions (The answer are compiled by Steve and Myself)

The main question on everyone lips this month is the state of the greens. This is due to the adverse weather conditions we have had over the winter causing a bad attack of Fusarium (Snow Mould) . Some members have commented about others greens in the area being in better conditions. Unfortunately, some course do have a regime of spraying chemicals from Autumn to Spring to kill the Fungi which cause the Fusarium (Snow mould) . We need Fungi within our soil it is a vital part of Life in the Soil. What we need to do is have a nice balance between Fungi and Bacteria, there is a war going on under our turf and who wins it depicts what happens above. Also weather conditions can be different on each green take the 10th and the 18th for example, so weather conditions are going to be different on other courses (I know this for a fact as I have walked many a course in the country within the last thirty years).

The greens are bobbly at the moment due the combination of disease and uneven grass growth. When the soil warms up the grass will improve the surface dramatically. At the moment we are still getting low night time temperatures which make it unwise to put on too much water, this will slow down warming up of the soil and this in turn will slow any recovery and that will go in some way to explain why the greens are firm at the moment.

We have been asked for more sand in the bunkers, well we have ordered twenty tonnes of bunker sand and the bunkers will be getting filled as and when we get time, bunker maintenance is an ongoing project and very time consuming. We don't replenish sand in the winter because bad weather i.e. heavy rain and strong winds would leave them in the same state by the time spring comes around.

Ah, the most asked question over the years, can we have a drop zone by the pond on the third hole. Just putting a drop zone near the pond does not mean you have to use it. Therefore, the concerns you have point of entry and dropping in the wrong place would not necessary be addressed. For this to work you would have to make it a local rule and that needs to be agreed by Sandhill Golf Club Ltd. This is still ongoing and will be looked in to in more depth.

There are no immediate plans to rebuild tee boxes at the present. Although some are better than others, that point is taken on board, we feel that they are all fit for purpose. Any future planned improvements will be relayed to the members when necessary .Marker posts for 150 yds have been used on 2 separate occasions in the past and have been proved unsuccessful, the first time the marker post we purchased by the members club and concreted in, with one season around 75% were smashed. The next attempt involved making them in house with metal poles which were sprayed and looked very smart, again these were pulled up by golfers and left lying in the grass, it was then almost impossible to replace them in their sockets. The yellow dots are cost effective.

Another member asked why we didn't hollow tine and top dress. We do top dress and also verti-drain on a regular basis. Hollow coring is not something that needs to be carried out on a regular basis unless you have poor soil and a heavy thatch problem, we have neither and so verti-draining is more effective. We do not use hand mowers very often on the greens because like every normal club we do not have the time or the money to do so. Triple ride on mowers will produce a cut as good if not better for a quarter of the cost and time. Also we would have to employ 4 green staff every Saturday & Sunday where two are adequate.

APRIL

Steve sprayed seaweed and a wetting agent on to the greens and then added a granular feed to encourage growth.

MAY

Steve will continue maintaining the golf course and as the turf starts growing mowing will get more intense. He will be spraying the clover (thanks goodness) and weeds. The fairways are going to be fertilised depending on the weather (need rain enough to water it in). The bunkers will be renewed with sand, which is ongoing. The ladies tees will be mown more (Steve had a slight hiccup with staff) because some of them are quite small they have to be hand mown.

I know sometimes I can get a bit technical so I apologise now. But I do think if you will be patient with me when you see a bit of disease in the future you will think 'hah I know what causes that' so with that thought in mind here comes a bit of technical.

Turf Pest & Disease Control

Snow moulds and Fusarium pink patch



Identification

1. Do you have coloured patches in your turf?
2. Has it been cold (less than 7°C) for several weeks?
3. Has your grass been wet or covered with snow for several weeks?
4. Is it March, April or May?

If the above conditions identify your turf-problem, then snow moulds may be present on your turf.

General Description

Snow moulds are a group of fungi that are capable of attacking your grass when the air and soil temperatures are too cold for the grass leaves to grow. There are many different fungi that can attack your turf in the cold, but all of them require months of cold, wet weather. If the grass leaves are dry or the days are warm enough for the grass to grow, the snow mould fungi cannot attack your turf. These fungi are natural members of your turf, and they are difficult to control without fungicides. Whilst there are many different fungi that attack grasses when they are cool and wet, the most common diseases are grey snow mould and Fusarium pink patch

(pink snow mould). Both of these diseases start to develop in the autumn of the year, but the disease symptoms are only observed in the winter and early spring. The other snow mould diseases occur rarely, and their identification requires an expert examination. It is important to determine which snow mould (grey or Fusarium pink patch) is attacking your grass, because they develop and are controlled differently.

Grey snow mould

Grey snow mould is characterised by its grey mycelium, tan grass leaves, and formation of sclerotia. If you are a grass pathologist these terms mean a lot, but if not, don't despair, they are easy to understand. All fungi produce mycelia. Mycelia are very tiny hair-like tubes that are grey in colour, but thinner than a spiders web. When there are enough of them together, they are visible with the naked eye. You will only observe mycelia if the turf is wet. The best time to look for them is in the morning. Spiders, insects and other organisms will produce mycelium-like materials, so some care needs to be taken. The grey snow mould fungus also produces sclerotia. Sclerotia are hard, small bodies that protect the fungus from drought, heat and so on. They are about the size of a pin head. You can find these in the dead grass leaves of a patch. Sclerotia are found only after 3-5 months of cool wet weather. Look for them in the early spring, but don't be disappointed if you cannot find them, sometimes they do not form.

Fusarium pink patch

This disease also requires cold, wet weather, but develops faster than grey snow mould, requiring only a month or so for the disease to appear in your turf. It, too, produces mycelium, but fortunately it is often pink or red. Fusarium is the Latin name of the fungus that causes pink patch. Whilst the Latin name means little to most of us, it tells the plant pathologist that this fungus does not produce sclerotia, but instead produces millions of very tiny spores that can spread the disease.

How to reduce the severity of snow moulds before you see disease in your turf

Keep your turf mown properly, never let it get too long before you stop mowing it in the autumn of the year. Never fertilise your turf too close to the time when the grass stops growing in the autumn. Do not walk or play on frozen turf. This damages the leaves and attracts snow mould fungi. Finally, if your turf had snow mould last year, you might want to consider a fungicide treatment in the autumn. Timing the application of fungicides to stop the snow moulds is tricky, because you must first determine which snow mould disease you have, and then you must apply the fungicide about the time the disease starts developing.

How to reduce the severity of snow moulds when you see the disease in the late winter or spring

Because snow moulds require cold, wet weather and are not dependant on snow covering the turf, these diseases can continue to develop in the late winter or early spring. However, in most years as soon as the grass greens up and starts growing, the snow mould diseases will disappear. The best way to rid your turf of snow mould patches is to encourage the grass to grow, by applying fertiliser and mowing it. In addition, hand raking the snow mould patches will encourage the grass in those areas to grow quickly.

Remember:

Snow moulds can kill your turf. Usually, however, they only kill the leaves, and your turf will recover in the spring.

HI

I hope this was informative for you and please if there is something you are not quite sure of '**ASK ME A QUESTION**'.

Next month I would like to do an article of the Life in our Soil, which will show you who's in the battle and what happens when either side wins!