

Welcome

Rigby Taylor and Top Green welcome you to the first edition of their newsletter – designed to keep you up-to-date with the latest developments in grass seed cultivars.

With ever-increasing demands from sports and amenity surfaces – the tiny grass seed has a vital role to play in ensuring presentation standards are high.



Brian Robinson is Director of Seed Research for leading grass seed agent Rigby Taylor, sole supplier

of Top Green specialist seed in the UK. By carrying out extensive trials and research the company has created a range of successful seed formulations under the Mascot banner.



Stephen Alderton is Marketing Manager for major specialist seed breeder Top Green and is based

at their Les Alleuds research and trial grounds in France.

Welcoming feedback from those involved in tending grass surfaces Brian Robinson says: "Working in partnership together we can ensure that turf in the UK meets current and future demands.

"Stephen and I are here to offer professional advice on the best grass cultivars to select, to ensure turf stays successfully on top."

Quality grass raises the game

How a regular overseeding programme has achieved dramatic improvements to grass cover and given more consistent conditions at an Essex golf course.

THE 18-hole parkland course at the North Weald Golf and Country Club, based in Essex, has been the subject of a dedicated maintenance programme over the last three-years.

"Quality and consistency of playing surfaces has been raised significantly," says Bryan Girling, Course Manager.

The club's current owner, Andrew Lloyd-Skinner, looked to improve course conditions so contacted Rigby Taylor, following a personal recommendation. Brian Robinson, Director of Seed Research, together with Stephen Denton, Grass Seed Development Manager, visited the club and offered advisory and technical advice on the best way forward.

Overseeding programme

Managing the 260-acres site, Girling works with his team of four, who he describes as 'a hard working bunch'.

They made vital improvements to the fairways, through a more intensive management programme.

Girling describes the seed bed: "People thought it would be impossible to make things grow, as parts of our course are on Essex Clay.

"So we vertidrain, used an organic compost to improve conditions and then sowed a dedicated grass seed mixture."

Overseeding took place in spring and autumn and the mix includes: 30 per cent Greenfair perennial ryegrass, 30 per cent Helena slender creeping red fescue, 25 per cent Belleaire chewings fescue, 10 per cent Hollywood strong creeping red fescue and 5 per cent Highland browntop bent.

For the first year this programme was used on five of the fairways



Stephen Denton (left) of Rigby Taylor with Bryan Girling at North Weald club

but, due to tremendous results of a more uniform and dense sward, has been increased to six and is on-going.

Investment has also been made in new machinery. The club has added a fairway mower, greens mower, out-front rotary for the rough and new spinner-spreader.

He adds: "We were particularly interested to see what happened on the 11th, as this was the worst fairway on the course.

"The fescue and bent density was very poor and in the winter this made the rye very obvious."

Three seasons have passed and it is now one of the best, so the

programme has reaped dramatic improvements.

"It is just phenomenal what has been achieved by using these cultivars," says Girling.

"Golf clubs need to look at various issues, the way climate change is going, and Top Green and Rigby Taylor have hit these on the head with their cultivar development."

A good working relationship has been paramount to the success of this tailored project.

Girling adds: "It helps tremendously knowing I can phone Rigby Taylor at any time for technical advice."

Seeking top-rating sports surfaces

The seed is just one of five key elements required for a sports surface to perform at its best. All the following have a vital role to play:

- Seed
- Soil and rootzone
- Drainage and irrigation
- Nutritional and maintenance programme
- Environment

Golf courses: The latest grass seed cultivars mean harder wearing, more consistent swards

can be achieved to cope with year-round play.

Modern stadia: Cultivars now help combat stadia issues, such as shade and lack of air movement, and have good recoverability.

Cricket: New seeds ensure rapid root establishment, to stabilize the soil structure, and provide good colour throughout the season.

Amenity areas: Grass seed is now available with slower growth habits and which create less risings – helping to significantly reduce maintenance costs.

Solutions to climate change

WHEN A 22-STRONG contingent of golf course managers, local authority groundsmen and MOD contractors visited leading seed breeder Top Green they saw first-hand the plots containing the 'next generation' of grasses.

Bowled over by the trials, Frank Kempster, course manager at the 18-hole Glen Gorse Golf Club in Leicester says: "I was particularly impressed with the tall fescue grasses that stand up to drought and keep their colour, as this will be vital when we experience dry, hot summers."

Wet or dry conditions suit tall fescues

But that is not all, the new variety



Ground managers during their visit to see the Top Green grass seed trials at the Les Alleuds site in France

of rhizomatous tall fescue, Grande, has a vital role to play in a mix, as it flourishes in dramatic extremes of wet or dry weather conditions. This is due to its deep rooting structure, which goes more than a metre deep into the soil, considerably improving re-growth capacity. Tall fescue

Scorpion also boosts turf density and is included in mixes for sports and landscaping applications.

And work is currently continuing to develop a tall fescue cultivar with shorter growth habit, making it highly suitable for golf course use.

Greenkeepers and groundsmen

wanting to learn more about the latest developments in this grass breeding programme of tall fescues should contact: Rigby Taylor 01483 446900 (Guildford) 01204 677777 (Bolton) 0131 333 3344 (Scotland) www.rigbytaylor.com

Keeping natural turf on top

SPECIALIST grass seed breeder Top Green is continually working to improve the qualities of their grass seed cultivars - to ensure they meet the exacting demands of today's golf courses, modern sports pitches and ornamental grass surfaces.

More than 5,000 trial plots at their Les Alleuds site in France make sure new cultivars are thoroughly trialled for professional use.

Taking more than 12 years to develop, top-performing cultivars ensure natural turf surfaces stay ahead of the game by being able to cope better with drought conditions, stay greener in the sizzling sun, need less cutting and

create less risings.

Leading seed agent Rigby Taylor works in conjunction with Top Green - and supplies feed back on the turf problems faced at the sharp end by today's professional greenkeepers and groundsmen. These issues are then fed into the breeding programme.

With years of expertise in agronomy, Rigby Taylor's Director of Seed Research, Brian Robinson, says: "Top-rating individual cultivars need to be carefully selected to create a site-specific grass seed mix. "This has a dramatic impact on the quality of turf surface which can then be produced."

Lighting up time for the Twickenham pitch



Twickenham Stadium's Keith Kent with Brian Robinson from Rigby Taylor

LEADING football and rugby groundsmen agree, if time and money were no object, they would all choose lighting rigs as their 'must have'!

Dramatically improving pitch conditions by letting grass grow all year round achieves an excellent natural turf surface - kicking into touch any talk of using artificial grass in stadiums.

At the famous Twickenham ground Keith Kent and his team

use Rigby Taylor's dedicated R14 grass seed mix to produce an even dense sward. And the mix is being successfully used, in conjunction with lighting rigs, to help overcome serious shade issues.

Head Groundsman Keith explains: "Light levels are low in certain areas, so we are using this hard-wearing R14 mix and lighting rigs to help ensure we have excellent coverage on all the pitch."

Described as 'nature's living skin' natural turf is good for our health

Key environmental benefits of natural turf include:

- Helps to neutralize carbon emissions
 - Removes dirt and dust from the atmosphere
 - Cools the air
 - Purifies our water supply
 - Releases oxygen
- Did you know a football pitch of natural grass provides the same oxygen needed by 27 families of four?*



Are you selecting the correct seed formulation?

Climate change from the north to the south means it is vital to make the correct selection of grass cultivars for a given area.

Creating a bespoke mix, made up of species which have different attributes, will make a dramatic difference to the turf surface.

Brian Robinson says: "I cannot stress enough how vital it is greenkeepers look carefully at their selection of cultivars.

"They set the standards for the whole course."

Why a mixture?

From the 10,000 grass species in the world there are 150 types in the UK – four of which are extremely useful.

Today's perennial ryegrasses exhibit quick germination and are used within the golf course for increased wearability and durability. And some ryegrasses are now extremely useful for cricket, as their crowns have been reducing from the original varieties. ECB trials found within six weeks some grasses, including Greenflash, recovered well.

Rough stalked meadowgrass is often mixed with ryegrasses, as they offer protection to each other. There is a marked improvement in grass cover at the end of the winter, of around 20 per cent.

By including within a mix red fescue, which is quick to germinate; fine fescue, developing at a moderate rate; and browntop bent, which is slow to establish, you can achieve consistently good grass cover.

On course to cut costs

Significant developments have been made by the Rigby Taylor and Top Green team, in their quest to develop cultivars to meet your sports, amenity and landscaping needs.

GREENFLASH is a highly superior perennial ryegrass cultivar for the golfing market, setting new standards in fineness of leaf and density.



Top Green's Stephen Alderton checks development of latest cultivars at the Les Alleuds site in France

Stephen Alderton, Marketing Manager says "Greenflash is certainly a flagship we are extremely proud of,"

Cultivated to cope with year-round golf, Greenflash has exceptional wear resistance and performs well – even in the shade.

But where it cuts costs most is in its slow re-growth characteristics.

This means grass needs cutting less often and this cultivar also scores highly because it produces less risings.

Tests using twenty varieties and eight seed mixtures showed that the average amount of clippings per cut weighed in at 140gms – but with Greenflash this reduced dramatically to 20gms.

Less mowing means great cost savings in manpower and wear and tear on machinery.

GREENVIE is the new strong creeping red fescue, which is already ranked number one on the STRI list. Producing a dense sward this cultivar is designed for use on golf tees and fairways.

And Greenvie has undergone significant trials to ensure it meets the challenges of year-round play.

Perennial Ryegrasses:

GREENWAY A very special cultivar – which only comes along once in every decade, excels both on its fineness of leaf and hard wearing characteristics.

This means it has a place on the cricket pitch as well as football and rugby pitches.

GREENFAIR Very much on the hard wearing side of sports, Greenfair is ideal for football and rugby pitches.

Root development is excellent – emphasizing the good recovery aspect of this cultivar.

ACE Finer leafed, Ace fits well into a cricket situation where it demonstrates its excellent recovery and ability to be cut extremely low.

These latest high-quality cultivars are included in Rigby Taylor's Mascot range of dedicated grass seed mixtures, available in newly-designed, fully recyclable 10kg and 20kg bags, with finer mixes available in 10kg bags.



How seed trials in the Highlands of Scotland solve wind chill issues

STATE-OF-THE-ART grass seed trials in the coldest climatic conditions within the UK – the Cairngorms – has led to the development of new

cultivars which can survive and thrive in this inhospitable climate. Knowledge gained has been transferred to winter

sports pitches – ensuring quicker establishment and denser grass cover during the colder winter months.

Altitudes in the Cairngorms span from 600 metres to more than 1,080 metres and winter temperatures regularly fall below –12degC. Developing seed cultivars to withstand the region's low temperatures and high winds, often gusting up to 100 mph, was a major challenge, involving intensive trials at a range of locations.

Brian Robinson, Director of Seed Research says:

"We carefully monitored plant development and effects of wind chill."

"Cultivars have now been developed which are tremendously resilient and will grow at temperatures down to less than 40degF, 6degC."



Brian Robinson checks how cultivars are coping with wind chill in Scotland

Latest Airbus and New Grass Seeds touch base

FLYING IN, following years of research and development, the awesome new Airbus A380 is heralded as the next generation of passenger-carriers.

But this Super Jumbo aeroplane, with its extra wide wingspan, has to land and take-off safely – as the plane's engines could be damaged if they suck up grass clippings.

And this is where dedicated grass seed research comes into play.

Top Green has already put these new cultivar mixes into some European airports.

Robinson explains: "we offer a sward which reduces bird strike, needs less maintenance and produces fewer risings, while maintaining the requirements for ornithology for airfields advised by ADAS."

Tall order for M25

TALL FESCUE and bespoke grass seed mixtures are being trialled by Rigby Taylor on the M25, for the Ministry of Transport. Monitored by ADAS, the mix is designed to improve the environmental aspect of the motorway surroundings and stabilise the clay bank.

An environmentally-friendly solution, the grass helps to stop bank slips and importantly reduces engineering costs as there is no need to build retaining walls.

"As tall fescues develop deep roots of one metre plus they maintain a good colour during periods of intense drought," says Brian Robinson.

"This helps to reduce the risk of fire on the banks."

How councils can create low-maintenance roadside verges with latest grass cultivars

FOLLOWING a trip to France, visiting Top Green's trials, Richard Barton of Torbay Council became passionate about low maintenance grasses.

Responsible for parks and green spaces at Torbay in Devon, Richard is the Service Manager for Landscape and Grounds Maintenance. He says: "If councils are serious about reducing their carbon footprint they should look at minimizing the amount they spend on cutting grass verges and reduce the weight of their grass clippings."

A significant trial is taking place on a site-sensitive verge by a road called Cherry Brook, where it is essential to achieve a good year-round appearance.

Following discussions on the site's topography a low maintenance grass seed mix was sown.

"More than 95 per cent of the new grass needs only three to four cuts a year, as opposed to seven to

eight previously," states Barton.

Barton concludes: "Low maintenance highway verges make a dramatic difference to the council's budget and this is definitely the way forward."



Verges looking good with low maintenance grasses

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