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Turf Care and Irrigation

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UK Irrigation
Association



Helping to create great croquet lawns

How the nutrition programme works

Tailor made fertilisers

These fertilisers are not "off the shelf". They are made specifically to my analysis for you and the quantities of nutrient in the bag can be changed to suit your lawns. For example, a bag of the Spring fertiliser (shown above) has 6% Nitrogen. No Change is the default option but both this can be adjusted up or down by 1%. The liquid fertiliser input can be adjusted by adding more or less concentrate when filling the tank. This means that you can control the nutrition levels very easily and there is no difference in cost.

How the fertiliser works

The granular fertilisers are all 1mm-2mm mini granules. The Spring/Autumn Biogran fertiliser contains a broad spectrum of bacteria and mycorrhizal fungi which encourage the breakdown of thatch into usable nutrients within the root zone. Results across many croquet clubs show that thatch is reduced by about 30% per annum until an ideal level of 5 to 8mm is reached. At this point the breakdown of thatch equals the production of thatch and therefore stays in balance. This system is in line with the Sports Turf Research Institute article "Do Not Disturb" and eliminates the need to remove thatch mechanically by scarification which is damaging to fine grasses.

Magnesium oxide is also included in the fertiliser to promote photosynthesis and plant health. The Mycorrhizae attach to the grassroots and grow long invisible hyphae into the surrounding soil. As a result of photosynthesis, the grass provides a constant supply of carbohydrates to the fungi. In exchange, the fungi provide minerals and moisture to the grass. It is a partnership made in heaven because the fungal hyphae are much longer and finer than the roots and have a much higher absorptive capacity.

The Summer fertiliser has an organic base and releases nutrients over an eight week period. The fertiliser is converted into usable nutrition for the plants by bacterial action. When favourable growing conditions exist (warm and moist), the bacteria are more active thus providing increased nutrients in sympathy with plant demand. The

slow release is accomplished by incorporating longer, more complex molecules which take bacteria longer to break down.

I prefer to apply fertiliser late in the day as morning dew will help to dissipate the granules. If possible apply before rain is expected. Do not apply fertiliser if the grass is stressed (drought). The fertiliser is not toxic to humans, pets or wildlife and the croquet lawn can be used immediately after application.

Optional winter feeds.

The Liquid Winter Feed 18 0 10 is applied at a quarter strength and is a very economical way of maintaining a healthy sward during the winter months.

Wetting Agent

It is a good idea to prevent the onset of Dry Patch by using a wetting agent. I recommend Resolute which remains effective in the root zone for 3 months instead of 4 weeks like most wetting agents. Resolute was first available two or three years ago and I have been using it for the last two years along with a growing number of croquet clubs. It can be mixed in your sprayer tank with the Liquid Biofeed.

Soil conditioner

Soil Conditioner is essential on some alkaline lawns to clean the soil and help produce a superb, smooth playing surface. If you would like to know more about the beneficial effects of this product, please phone me.

Growth Regulator

Growth regulator reduces the vertical growth of the plant but increases lateral growth, thus thickening the sward and also promotes root development. It helps to keep lawns faster for longer. I find that I still mow twice a week but the amount of clippings is reduced by about 50% and my lawn stays faster between cuts.

Unfortunately this product is classified as a pesticide and therefore the operator (or supervisor) must have a Pesticide Certificate. I use 40 ml per month in May, Jun, July and August. Sometimes I skip a month if the growth is low.

Liquid Iron 6%

Liquid iron can be tank mixed with Biofeed and is a good way of greening up your grass and providing some protection against fungal attack. I use 2 litres mixed with Biofeed and 40 litres of water for my croquet lawn. It isn't strong enough to kill moss but it does seem to kill red thread to some degree. I am still trying it out so will report on findings during this year.

Moss

Moss produces spores twice a year so should be treated in Spring and Autumn to kill the moss and prevent new spores ripening. Moss doesn't have a vascular system and the roots have no function except to hold onto the ground, so re-growth is caused by spores in the soil not from roots. The winter feed mentioned above will reduce the moss to some extent but is not as strong as soluble Iron. The grade of iron that I supply dissolves well even in very cold water, is widely used by professionals and works really well. One bag is enough to treat the whole lawn five times so is very cost effective, there are cheaper alternatives but Iron comes in many grades and some can be hard to dissolve and very damaging to sprayers. At the dilution that I recommend it will blacken moss and I usually leave it and let the grass

grow through, that way the surface isn't disrupted. However, you can rake lightly but try not to disturb the rootzone.

Be careful to wash your sprayer out very thoroughly so that no iron is left in the pipes or pump as it will re-crystallise and potentially ruin the sprayer. For spot treatment, a watering can and fine rose can be used.

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