

## **GROUNDSMAN CALENDAR**

### **JANUARY**

It is best to keep off the square if conditions are inclement with frost or snow. If conditions are mild it is prudent to carry out brushing on the square to disperse the dew and reduce humidity around the grass plant. It may be beneficial to inspect the cricket ground for the damage and disease. Aeration of the outfield with deep silting tines will remove surface compaction and assist drainage. Ensure that all the machinery and equipment is serviced and in good working order.

### **FEBRUARY**

Preparation for the cricket season begins with inspection and brushing/dragmatting. Initiate rolling on the square once the conditions permit, starting with a light roller of 100kg (2 cwt) or the cylinder mower without the blades to remove the frost heave. Any dead fibre in the surface can be removed by using a scarifier with the brush or thatch prevention reel. A light pass at this time of year prevents scarring the surface.

### **MARCH**

Slowly build up the roller weight to consolidate the surface. Rolling should be done in as many directions as possible to ensure an even surface free from ridging. Find the corners of the square and mark out the positions of each pitch on the square. Gradually lower the height of cut so that it is 18 mm (3/4 inch) by the end of the month. The end of the month is a good time to apply fertiliser. An application of autumn/winter fertiliser will ensure there is no surge of soft growth which would be a problem if there were a return to cold weather. Mowing on the outfield should commence towards the end of the month.

### **APRIL**

The full fixture list will be available and all matches should be allocated pitches ensuring that there is an equal distribution over the whole square. Worm kill the square with an approved lumbricide, if conditions demand. Any person using pesticides should be trained to perform the operation in an acceptable manner. Some operators require a certificate of competence which can be obtained through the Institute of Groundsmanship. Continue to mow the square at least one a week at this time of year. The preparation of a pitch should start at least ten days before the match. The height of cut is gradually lowered until no more can be removed without scalping the surface. A sequence of rolling will be required to ensure the pitch is firm and dry before the match.

### **MAY**

Keep a look out for any weeds on the square, set up a system of removal by hand during pitch preparation to ensure they do not establish. In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to apply a selective weedkiller making sure that the label recommendations are followed. The height of cut of the square can be lowered down to 15 mm (5/8 inch) during the growing season. The square should be cut two times per week to encourage tillering. The square will require an application of a spring and summer fertiliser that will be higher in nitrogen with no phosphate and little potash.

### **JUNE**

Pitch preparations will continue as and when required. Ensure pitches are repaired after use so that they will recover in time to be used later in the season. Levels should be restored with cricket loam and any bare patches overseeded with amenity perennial ryegrass. The use of a sarrel roller over the pitch will provide surface aeration and also allow the light application of fertiliser to reach into the rootzone of the grasses. Remove any weeds by hand if found on the square.

## **JULY**

A second application of spring/summer fertiliser can be applied. Avoid placing fertiliser on the pitch in preparation to reduce the risk of scorch. Do not apply any phosphate at this time of the year as it may encourage annual meadow grass. Continue to mow the square twice a week and the outfield one a week. July is very often the month for the finals of cup competitions. A little extra preparation of the pitch for the special occasions will add to the presentations.

## **AUGUST**

Pitches are now being used for the second or third time in the season. Adequate repair work earlier will be of great benefit now. At the end of the month it is time to take stock of materials and requirements for the autumn renovation. Make sure that orders are placed in good time. Little consortiums of clubs have been set up around various regions to carry out bulk purchase of materials and help reduce the costs. August is the last month in the year to consider selective weed control on the square or outfield.

## **SEPTEMBER**

The playing season is coming to a close and all the hard work will soon begin to ensure good pitches are available for next year! Repairs should be carried out to pitch ends and other worn areas. Take out a core on the square to help determine the requirements for the autumn renovation. It is then possible to identify the depth of any thatch or the development of layering in the square. Complete the renovation of the square which normally includes scarification, aeration over-seeding, fertiliser application and top-dressing. The height of cut on the square can be lifted back up to 18 mm (3/4 inch) and mowing take place as growth demands.

## **OCTOBER**

Continue to brush the square and mow when necessary. Overseed again any weak areas on the ends to ensure a good cover for next year. Keep an eye for moss or disease and treat if necessary. Now that the playing season has finished it is a convenient time to pay attention to the surrounds such as boundary fencing or hedges, driveways, areas around the club house and maybe, even tidy up the ground shed!

## **NOVEMBER**

Check the sightscreens, give them a coat of paint and grease the wheels then get them well anchored ready for the winter winds. Brush the square regularly to remove the dew. If any deep aeration is required to the square then it is best done now when there is sufficient moisture to get full penetration of the tines. Only solid tines should be used, slit tines may open up during the following summer. Extra application of top-dressing may be required down the tine holes.

## **DECEMBER**

Any serious drainage problems can be identified at this time of year. Check drainage pipes in the outfield (if there are any) to ensure there are no blockages. Inspect the silt chambers and outfalls and clean out any debris. If the grass continues to grow and there is no risk of a night frost then it may require tipping with the mower. Never let it get so long that it is severely checked when cutting down in the spring. Continue to brush the square to remove the dew and reduce the risk of disease but avoid work on the square if frost is about.