

The Grounds Department – Preparing for the new School Year

After the school summer term has finished, the Grounds department start work on the preparations needed for the following year's cricket season, preparing the sports pitches for the autumn and winter term, renovating the formal grass areas, and the various infrastructural projects that we can't get to during term time. It's a very busy time!

Cricket

One of the first jobs is to renovate the cricket squares in order to prepare the surface for the following year. This involves Fraise mowing the surface off (severe scarification to remove all of the vegetative matter from the square surface), deep scarification to a depth of 5mm to give a key for the new grass seed to germinate in, and then aeration to a depth of 100mm with 8mm solid tines to break the rolled pan in the square root zone.



Figure 1 Once the surface has been prepared we wait until the weather forecast is favourable for good germination of the new seed (temperatures below 25C and light rain)

Once the surface has been prepared, the squares are reseeded with four varieties of dwarf rye grass that will tolerate the conditions that cricket demands (cutting to 3mm and heavy rolling), a high potassium, low nitrogen fertiliser is applied as a pre seed feed to encourage good root growth in the new plants, and top dressed at 3kg/square metre with Kaloam cricket loam to cover the seed and to fill the holes created by the aeration process. The whole area is then luted and matted level to finish the surface.



Figure 2 All the dressing materials are applied by hand



Figure 3 Good germination will give a 80-90% return on the seed sown within 10 days

After the cricket renovations have been completed the lawns are scarified, aerated and top dressed with sand containing lignite (lignite acts as a sponge to hold any nutrients that are applied in terms of compound fertiliser and prevents the compounds leaching from the root zone). The top dressing is also used to improve the percolation rate of the surface as the bulk of the soils on the Sandroyd site are clay and become waterlogged during the winter months.



Figure 4 After 4 weeks the surface has grown in completely

As well as the renovations, we prepare the winter sports pitches for the forthcoming term. The rugby pitches are prepared (poles erected and padded, marked out by hand) and are cut to 50mm (industry standard Height of Cut for Rugby). The surrounds to the pitches are cut to 56mm to improve the wear resistance of the pitch touchlines to footfall.

