

Grass Clippings

Around the grounds

It's been a pretty wet during the last week on site and conditions would, under normal circumstances have closed the golf course for some time following the heavy showers. The team have continued to work to keep the sports areas in good condition. On the poraflex courts, we have been jet washing the areas to pull out fine particles of dust to unblock the pores to allow them to drain as quickly as possible in future. On the croquet lawns, the team have been trenching in a new drainage pipe to improve the removal of excess water from the lawns when we have heavy rain.

On the golf course, we have been out with the Vertidrain punching in holes on fairways to drive down water away from the surfaces. We are in the last throws of cleaning leaf piles away from woodland areas and keeping areas as tidy as possible ready for spring.

The 18th tee area has now been prepared and is growing in as well as it can, during winter. Once the area is firm and we have root growth, the contractor will install the netting, ready for play. We have also completed landscaping on the 16th and all other planting areas targeted for this season. We still have some woodland work to do, tidying up trees and extending the log wall towards the back of the 8th tee in the next few weeks. But before we can turn around, spring will be creeping over the horizon and then it's back into the medley of cutting furiously to keep up with grass growth. The wheel of the seasons turns once more ...



Vertidrain fairways



Finished landscaping the area between holes 2,3 and 15



Ground breaking has begun for the new Padel courts



Renewing the edge of our practice green bunker and installing a new revetted side



Native planting on the recycling area between 12 and 13 once grown in will disguise the geo-textile weed barrier



New tee area on hole 18 growing in the new turf has begun



Planting now complete on the landscape area behind the 16th green

Peat production

Peat production and the alternatives for horticulture continue to be an issue for the trade. Bord na Móna, the semi-state company in Ireland, created in 1946 by the Turf Development Act, began developing the peatlands of Ireland with the aim to provide economic benefit for Irish communities and achieve security of energy supply for the recently formed Irish Republic. The development of peatlands involved the mechanised harvesting of peat, which took place primarily in the midlands of Ireland. The company's last full peat harvest took place in 2018, followed by a partial harvest in 2019 and a full suspension of harvesting operations last year. This suspension is now permanent and the company will cease any remaining harvesting preparations, including planning and substitute consent applications. Bord na Móna said it will continue to supply customers with peat briquettes and horticultural peat from stocks of peat which has already been harvested. There is increased demand for peat-free plants after pressure from NGOs and targets from the Government to reduce peat use have rumbled on over the last decade. But supply could be an issue well into 2021. Many nursery suppliers are changing to peat-free production for plants, to supply the trade customers, such as the National Trust and there is a growing awareness that this is the way to go to save peat lowlands for future generations. It is certainly the case that demand will outstrip production in the short term. The pandemic has had an effect, with gardening becoming a lockdown

hobby for many during the spring and summer. But with the realisation that peat production is now on the way out alternatives have to be sourced now to make pot plant and container plant sales sustainable in the future.

In your garden

It's pretty bleak outside and avoiding the showers and getting motivated in the garden is something of a will over post-Christmas merry making. But there are days when the sun has broken through the grey over-hanging cloud in the last week and it's energising to get out and start the move to get the garden back in shape for spring. Provided the ground isn't frozen or waterlogged, now is the ideal time to plant shrubs, trees and hedging. Most plants are in a dormant state now so are very forgiving for being moved, divided and generally messed around with while 'out of season'. Any remaining perennials that have gone soggy in the top growth can be cleared of the debris, so it doesn't shelter slugs and snails. Cut back the flower heads of ornamental grasses if winter rains have damaged them. January's a good time to give wisteria its winter pruning. Cut back last year's summer shoots to 2-3 buds from the main framework and in a few months, you should have a wisteria smothered in flowers, fingers crossed. In the same vein, prune roses now while they are dormant. Remove all spindly or crossing branches and dead wood, then cut back the remaining branches by a third, using a sloping cut just above a bud so that rainwater runs off the cut, away from the bud. If you have already planted out spring bedding, it's also a good time to tidy them up, deadhead winter pansies for a second flush of flowers in spring. Primroses can also be checked for dead leaves and removal of flower stems going over. Generally, weed and lightly tiller around spring bedding to help de-compact the soil before bulb growth.