



Vitax concentrate on savings...

WILTSHIRE City Council's busy Grounds Maintenance department stands to save a third on line marking costs this season, following a change to concentrated paint.

Salisbury City Council currently maintains eight football and six rugby pitches, and has outside contracts with Salisbury Rugby Club and Salisbury City Football Club.

Once the season starts, most of the pitches need to be re-marked every week.

Led by Grounds Supervisor Graham Dewey, the grounds maintenance team changed to Vitax Supaturf's Supa Stadia Eco. Groundsman Bob Skutt says: "This new product is so concentrated that we can mark out three or four pitches without thinking about going back to the van to re-load." Graham Dewey maintains that the five-litre drums of Supa Stadia Eco are doing the same amount of line marking as the former 12.5-litre drums.

Bob Skutt is also happy with the council's new Supaturf Xcel line marking machines, specifically designed for use with Supa Stadia Eco, although they will work well with any Topline paint. Info: 01530 510060

Easing the pressure

Wondering about winter maintenance? Chris Bassett talks to Agripower's Grant Holmes

WITH budgets getting tighter and expectations from fans getting even higher, the pressure on groundsmen and contractors to produce pristine playing surfaces under demanding deadlines is getting intense.

Regular maintenance on natural sports surfaces is essential to keep the surface suitable for play throughout the season. Summer is the time to renovate winter sports pitches where clubs generally implement light renovations preparing the pitches for the cold, wetter months.

By implementing these procedures, improved drainage, a healthier sward and a higher resilience to disease can be achieved and therefore a better playing surface.

"Key to completing any successful project is planning,"



Verti-drain your pitches twice a year.

says Grant Holmes of Buckinghamshire-based Agripower Contractors. "I try and talk to clients about end of season renovations in January/February time but many think it is too early. But as soon as the season finishes, the phone starts ringing."

By that time clubs have often left it too late. There are no shortcuts to ensure a quality playing

surface. Also, during the summer months, pitches/stadiums can often be used for generating extra revenue during the 'off season' for concerts.

Aeration, scarification, overseeding, top dressing, fertilising and weed control all help to achieve the end goal of a healthy and long-lasting surface for players to enjoy. See below for Grant's maintenance advice:

ESSENTIAL MAINTENANCE TIPS

Deep Aeration

Verti-draining provides a fast short-term solution for compaction and surface water retention. It provides deep aeration to the root zone, promoting healthy growth, while also improving drainage. Verti-draining the pitch twice a year is advisable. Recent additions now available include the Sisis Aer-Aid and Kensett Sport's Gwazae deep probe decompactor from New Zealand.

Scarifying

Removing excess thatch helps grass thicken up, which strengthens it against disease. Scarifying or verti-cutting can encourage vertical growth and avoid horizontal growth where it is not wanted.

Overseeding

Disc seeders enable you to seed large areas in a relatively short period of time. For closer application, seeding is often carried out in three directions.

Top Dressing

Trueness, holding character, stability and response to rain or irrigation inputs are controlled or substantially affected by the rootzone surface. Top dressings control properties affecting playing quality as well as turf grass performance. Frequent applications assist greatly.

Fertilising

Grass requires enough nutrients to maintain it in a healthy state. Ideally, the soil's nutrient status should be checked on an annual basis if it's a free-draining site. Tests for Nitrogen content in soil are not recommended. Many fertiliser suppliers offer a free soil analysis service.

Weed Control

Weed control is important to maximise not only the aesthetic appeal of your pitches, but also the playability and resistance to wear.

Info: 01494 866776 or visit www.agripower.co.uk

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