



Top Dressing Guidelines

What is a Top Dressing and where should it be used?

Fine Turf:	Areas cut to below 5mm e.g. golf greens and bowling greens <i>A blend of sand and organic amendment that has been finely screened (3mm maximum) and is generally heat treated.</i>
Winter Games Pitches:	Longer grass than fine turf e.g. football and rugby pitches <i>A screened sand/organic mix or washed and graded moist silica sand.</i>
Outfield:	Golf fairways and cricket outfields <i>A compatible screened sand/organic mix or washed and graded moist silica sand.</i>
Synthetic Pitches:	Any synthetic surface pitch <i>Dried, washed and graded silica sand</i>
Summer Games	Cricket wicket and tennis courts <i>A blend of clay, silt and sand to give a Motty strength, loam is screened (4mm maximum) and can be heat treated.</i>

What are the benefits of using Top Dressing?

- Helps to maintain a smooth, true running surface
- Improves mowing efficiency
- Helps prevent the build-up of thatch
- Enables control of organic matter content, water infiltration and aeration
- Essential in the maintenance of rootzone depth
- Improves germination in over-seeded areas
- Improves or sustains appropriate soil texture

How to choose the right Top Dressing

- Firstly, there is no such thing as a universally 'good' Top Dressing
- Test and establish the existing profile of the green before selecting a Top Dressing. Over time a Top Dressing will add to and become part of the Rootzone, therefore, the two products must be compatible i.e. have similar composition and properties.
- A quality Top Dressing supplier will want to test your greens before selling you the right product for your particular application.
- Samples will be taken from the greens and tested to determine particle size distribution, pH and organic matter content.
- This information is used to identify a suitable Top Dressing that is compatible with the existing rootzone.

The results of using a mis-matched Top Dressing

- Layering problems – layers of different pore size systems within shallow depths of the rootzone.
- Water retention
- Reduction in porosity
- Problems with the air/water balance
- Rooting depth can be affected
- By the time the problems become apparent they may be impossible to rectify

The 70/30 Myth

The use of generic terms such as 70/30 and 80/20 are common in the turfgrass industry but actually mean nothing. Knowing the ratio of sand/soil does not tell the user anything about the quality of either the soil or the sand that has been used.

A purchaser should request a precise analysis of the Top Dressing in terms of

- Particle size
- Amount of silt/clay
- Organic matter content
- Lime content

Application

Frequent, light applications are recommended for the following reasons:

- Promotes fast integration
- Prevents layering
- Avoids smothering grass when growth is slow (Spring and Autumn)
- Avoids significant disruption to play