

Time for tea

Curious about the growing trend to use compost tea on the golf course, **Craig Parry**, course manager at South Staffordshire Golf Club, decided to give it a go, and hasn't looked back since



What were the reasons that drove your decision to use biology on the course?

Curiosity drove my decision. Around the time I chose to start using compost tea there was a few debates going on, whether it was on social media or in magazines. I was pretty sceptical about compost teas myself so thought the only way to find out peace of mind to whether they gave results or not was to trial them myself. I did not want to break the bank in doing so and this was when I was introduced to Clive at XL Pro Bio and I like his simple approach to compost tea and providing what I needed to test the waters of biology on the golf course.

What difference have you seen by using the biology on the course?

We generally do not get much disease here on the greens, however I had a few spots appear over the Christmas period, which I took the opportunity to spray out a compost brew with added vermi-compost which seemed to knock

the disease on the head. I have certainly seen an increase in bent grass within the sward even cutting at 3mm and general health in the turf with the reduction of using fertilisers as the humic and compost tea seem to work well at unlocking any nutrient locked within the soil profile. I think using the teas as an additive with a sensible fertiliser programme will have many benefits for the putting surface and the environment in the future.

How long did it take to see results?

Not long which was quite surprising, I had spoon fed the greens with some urea every two weeks or so from beginning of April only putting out roughly 2.5kg N per application then switched onto compost teas at the beginning of June. At the beginning I applied two weeks running to give it a good start and after the second application there was an instant colour up which did not tail off between applications. The next time I applied any form of N was in late September to aid

some aeration recovery and again that was only a small amount as I felt the greens did not need much due to the compost tea. So for those four months my programme was compost tea every two weeks, and some chelated iron and clipless every two weeks on staggered applications. I was very pleased with the results and my perception of using compost tea has completely changed and in my eyes has a place in the greenkeeping industry.

What difference has it made to the root zone?

A cleaner root zone, and I am sure over time this will only get better and create a more natural environment for the grass to grow in. Rooting levels are good and the greens have minimal thatch so I can only hope that using compost tea over a longer period of time will contribute to keeping thatch levels down and continue to improve density and length of roots.

What cost savings have you seen?

That's a difficult one to answer as anyone that knows me knows my wallet has mothballs and that is how I like to treat the club's money too and don't tend to spend too much on expensive fertilisers. Adding the compost tea into my programme for the season should see my fertiliser bill for my greens be slightly cheaper per monthly application, but any saving is a good saving. I certainly think that using the Biolift and ReviTEALised to tackle disease is a much cheaper option than a fungicide and using the natural products worked for me. My view is that cost should only be a small part of the equation and the bigger part should be to focus on which route to I want to take as a greenkeeper, whether it is to keep applying an unnecessary amount of fertiliser and chemicals or take a more natural approach and reduce those inputs but still produce surfaces I can be proud of and keeps the club members happy. I have chosen the latter. *For more information, visit www.xlprobio.co.uk*