

Landscape Management Plan

Grounds Department Working Practices Document



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1. Introduction.

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for all the horticultural practices that are carried out by the Grounds team to ensure that the correct standard is achieved whilst carrying out the many varied tasks within the University landscape. All the activities described are based on good horticultural practice following the latest relevant British Standards.

2. Formal lawn areas

.1 New areas; preparation, sowing, turfing Maintenance;

2.1 It is essential for the fast establishment of new lawn areas that the ground is thoroughly prepared using the correct techniques and materials for both seeding and turfing. Pay attention on clearing weeds, this can be done manually or with a systemic weed killer. Deep perennial weeds will need to be either dug out completely or treated. Cultivate the area to a depth of 150mm; remove large stones, roots, tufts of grass, rubbish, debris and any clay clods exceeding 50mm. For the seed bed reduce the top 25mm to a fine, firm tilth with a good crumb structure, rake the surface over in different directions to leave a true even surface making sure the ground is friable and firm but not compacted. Remove any surface stones and earth clods exceeding 50mm for general areas or 25 mm for fine lawn areas. It is essential that the cultivation is extended into grass areas which are adjacent and the levels are married in correctly. A pre-seeder fertilizer can be applied and raked in if necessary, if new top soil has been imported then it must meet BS 3882 with the correct declaration of analysis.

Sow seed to the correct depth and the recommended rate making sure there is good contact with the root zone to promote good germination and strong healthy growth. Sow seed ideally during autumn when there is warmth in the soil and in calm weather, spread the seed at the correct rate, half rate in one direction and the other half at right angles. Rake in lightly and then if no rain water with a sprinkler.

Before the initial cut pick off stones above 25mm and lightly roll the surface to consolidate it. When the grass is established between 40mm -75mm high, depending on the seed mixture it should be topped using a rotary mower leaving it between 25-50mm of growth.

Turf should be laid only when the weather is suitable and the soil conditions are moist. Avoid the extreme weather conditions e.g. drought, very wet, frost and snow. Turves should be laid on the prepared bed in a straight row lay planks over previously laid turves and stagger the joints, butted together and avoid stretching the turf. Avoid using small pieces of turf along edges, cut turves using an edging iron. Water turves using sprinklers to avoid wash out of the joint and make sure the water has percolated through to the root zone. Do not let the turf dry out as it will shrink.

Maintenance

2.2 Mowing

Grass areas around campus vary from formal lawns to meadowland areas, the frequency and height will depend on the type of area being cut and the specific requirement e.g. Graduation, buffer zones etc.

High spec lawn areas such as statue lawn and quad for example would need to be cut with ideally a roller mower with grass collection to leave a straight clean stipe. Any debris or obstacles would need to be removed prior to cutting. Frequency may vary depending on growth rate and demand.

Managed formal lawns such as Eastern gateway and the IAC for example can be cut with ride on rotary mowers alternating, depending on growth and climatic conditions, with cut and collect and during periods of dry weather, a mulching deck.

Managed recreational lawns including areas such as around accommodation blocks, Isambard complex and by the river can be cut with rotary ride on mowers depending on grass length and required finish this can be cut and leave or cut and collect.

Managed grassland areas include walkways through meadows also graded buffer areas such as North loop road and South loop road also walkways in Bicentenary gardens may be cut using ride on rotary mowers the graded buffer areas should be cut with a view to have the grassland getting progressively longer toward the fence line.

Meadowlands and conservation areas are cut twice a year normally around April and again in September depending on weather conditions, ideally this should be cut and collect depending on budget constraints. These areas include Isambard complex swale area, meadowland and Site one meadows which come under the 106a planning agreement.

Category	Frequency	Main growing season height	Before/after main growing season height
Managed formal lawn High spec	cut once a week	15mm-25mm	20mm-30mm
Managed formal lawn	cut every 7-10 days	20mm-50mm	25mm-50mm
Managed recreational lawn	cut every 10-14 days	50mm -100mm	75mm-100mm
Managed grassland areas	cut every 4-6 weeks	100mm-250mm	150mm-250mm
Meadowlands, Conservation areas	Twice a year cut	100mm	100mm

2.3 Aeration

A spiked roller with tines at least 25mm long can be used as a routine treatment to assist the penetration of air into the soil.

High profile areas should be aerated during the main growing season using a solid tine machine to a depth of around 100mm if possible at 100mm centres if the ground is compacted and the conditions permit. On larger areas a tractor and aerator can be used where appropriate.

Hollow coring can be carried out on particularly compacted ground or where the removal of thatch is required. Hollow tines will be required to remove around 100mm at 100mm centres, where appropriate the cores left can be broken up by drag matting and the debris left removed. Top dressing can be applied if necessary this should be fine and dry to facilitate spreading and the way it is worked in, also it needs to be of similar texture to the soil where the turf is growing.

2.4 Scarifying

For light scarifying to dethatch and remove mass carry out in spring or autumn using wire rakes or a powered scarifier. Heavy scarifying should be carried out in autumn as this can create a suitable seed bed allowing new seed to be sown in any gaps that have appeared.

2.5 Fertilizing

Granular feeds can be applied to the high profile lawns using a walk behind spreader, generally this would be a controlled release with a formulation suitable to soil type and needs. This generally would be done twice a year, once in spring/summer and then again in autumn paying particular attention to plant requirements.

A supplement of liquid feed, generally iron based, can be carried out at certain times to avoid plant stress also to help 'green up' key areas where needed such as graduation time. Use an appropriate walk behind sprayer.

2.6 Weed and Moss control

The application of selective weed killers and moss control may from time to time be required on some of the more high profile lawns .These would generally be carried out from spring onwards and need to be applied by a suitably qualified member of staff or a contractor.