

LAWNS FOR YOU

The Bowling Green Year

A month by month maintenance calendar for clubs that look after their own green



Duncan Gray, head greenkeeper at Lahinch, then Fine Turf Superintendent for Kyle and Carrick, in charge of eight golf courses and nine bowling greens, including Ayr Northfield for the men's and women's World Championships.

2026 to 2027 edition. Free to print and pin up in the shed. The latest version, and the articles behind it, are always at lawnsforyou.com/fine-turf/years-maintenance-bowling-green

How to use this calendar

This is the programme I have followed on greens every year of my working life. It is not complicated. What matters is doing the jobs in the right order, at the right time, and not skipping the dull ones over the winter.

Each month has four parts: the jobs in the order I would do them, what tells you it is time, the kit and materials to have to hand, and what the green should look like by the end of the month if you are on track. The figures that run through the whole year are on the next page, so that the month pages can stay short.

Adjust for where you are

The dates are for central and southern Scotland. In the south of the UK the spring runs up to two weeks earlier; from central Scotland northwards it can be later. Watch the grass and the weather rather than the calendar. My favourite trigger for the spring feed is seeing the farmers out feeding their fields: one of the only times you should ever follow farming methods.

The rules that apply all year

- **No work on the green while there is a white frost on it.** Walking on it once the white has lifted does no harm, but wait until the frost is out of the surface before you do anything else.
- **A sharp, well set mower.** Blunt or badly set mowers are the main cause of poor bowling surfaces. They tear the leaf, let disease in and stunt regrowth.
- **Little and often.** Feed lightly through the season, mow as often as you can, dress the heads a little every month. Big doses of anything cause more problems than they solve.
- **Aerate.** Spiking through the winter and whenever possible in summer gives the grass a far better root system, so it takes drought, wear and disease much better.
- **Move the heads.** At least a metre each time, with at least three settings, every second day in play and more often in wet weather or heavy play.
- **Go by the label.** Application rates vary a lot between products. The figures in here are a guide to what a green needs; the bag, bottle or barrel tells you how much of that product delivers it.

Where the programme comes from

The full detail behind every month is on lawnsforyou.com: the definitive guide to maintaining a bowling green (the operations, task by task), a full year's maintenance of a bowling green (the same programme by time of year), the autumn renovation article, the February to do list and the spring preparation guide. Everything in this calendar, the seed, the seaweed meal, the feeds, the iron and the written programme, is also available as one delivered package for one green for one year. Details on the last page.

The figures that run through the year

The green

A full size green is 42 by 42 yards, or 38 by 38 metres. For easy counting call it **1,500 square metres**. "Per green" figures in here mean that. Most greens are six rinks each way; a few are smaller.

Height of cut

The height on the mower is a **bench setting**, the gap between a straight edge across the rollers and the bottom blade. On a soft surface the machine sinks in and cuts lower than the setting, which is why a soft green needs a higher setting for the same actual cut.

- **Close of play to the end of February: 6 to 8 mm.** Six on a firm green with little thatch, eight on a soft old soil green that lies wet.
- **March:** down in half-mil steps to about 6 mm by the end of the month.
- **April:** half a mil a week, to 5.5 mm a week before opening and 5 mm on opening day.
- **In play: 4 to 5 mm** depending on the grasses, the speed the members want and where you are in the country. Fescue bowls well at 5; annual meadow grass has to be cut shorter for a fast true surface.

Mowing frequency

- Winter: a trim in mild dry spells whenever there is growth to take off, in at least four directions alternately.
- March: twice a week. April: three to four times a week.
- In play: a minimum of three times a week. The more often, the better the surface. Top facilities mow every day.

Aeration

- Deep slit roughly once a month, October to March, in the same direction each time. Chisel tines in between.
- In play: spike once a month with chisel or solid tines, before the verti-cut. No deep slits in summer: they open up in hot dry weather and dry the green out.
- Hollow coring and verti-draining only for a real reason: serious thatch, or a heavy soil that needs modifying.

Feeding

- **Spring, mid to late March:** a high nitrogen, high iron granular feed, no phosphate or potassium. 9 to 12% nitrogen with at least 9% iron; the shop's 9.0.0 with 11% iron is the one I use. Granular feeds are mostly around **50 g per square metre**.
- **In play, from the start of May:** liquid feed with seaweed **every six weeks or so** to mid-August; the last one can run into September. **2.5 to 4 litres of product per green**, carried in about **50 litres of water**: two fills of a 25 litre pedestrian sprayer, half a green to a fill. Walking speed changes the rate, so run a fill of plain water over half a green first to find your pace.
- **Halfway between each feed**, so roughly every three weeks: liquid seaweed with wetting agent at half rate. Spike and verti-cut just before each application.
- **Autumn, once the new seed has germinated** (two to three weeks after the renovation): low nitrogen, no phosphate, high potassium, something like **NPK 3.0.12** (potassium anywhere from 12 to 20%) with magnesium, iron and seaweed.
- **Winter, mid-November to late February:** iron every four to six weeks, weather permitting. Aim for three applications; some winters you will only manage two. **Dissolved sulphate of iron at 5 kg per green** through a sprayer. A little urea with it if the green is hungry, but only if needed.

The renovation

- Seed: a fine fescue and bent mix, no ryegrass, **25 g per square metre** on the heads and worn areas.
- Seaweed meal: **50 g per square metre**, over the whole green if you can.
- Top dressing: a medium-coarse straight sand, tested by a laboratory, at least three quarters of it in the 0.5 to 0.75 mm range. **About 2 kg per square metre, roughly three tonnes a green**; up to six if the green has been hollow cored. Keep some back for the spring.
- February: about **1 kg per square metre** on uneven or damaged areas. Too much at this time of year causes disease. Spring: a kilo or so per square metre on the heads, then a little on the heads every month in play.

Disease

Mainly fusarium. A green on this programme should rarely get a bad attack. Spot treat the patches with a strong sulphate of iron spray, **2.5 to 3 kg to a knapsack fill**, and a little dressing. Keep a fungicide on hand for a bad year; with luck it sits in the shed.

The year at a glance

Month	Main jobs	Feed and treatments	Height and mowing	Watch for
January	Winter checks: leaves, worm casts, standing water, bird damage. Deep slit once if the ground allows. Trim trees.	Iron if it is due (every 4 to 6 weeks)	6 to 8 mm; trim in mild spells	Fusarium, frost, moss
February	Inspect for damage. Fork or spike the problem areas. Light dressing where uneven. Mower to the agent. Banks repaired, ditches cleaned.	Last winter iron, late in the month, with a little nitrogen. Charcoal or calcified seaweed on soured patches.	6 to 8 mm; trim in mild spells	Poor drainage showing as yellow or dead grass
March	Everything serviced and all materials in by the 1st. Spring feed in the first mild spell. Verti-cut about two weeks after it. Check rink markers and kit.	Spring feed: 9.0.0 with 11% iron, about 50 g per square metre	Down in half-mil steps to 6 mm; twice a week	The farmers feeding their fields
April	Spike and scarify 10 to 14 days after the feed. Mow off the debris. Dress the heads and thin areas. Small repairs. Roll on opening morning.	Wetting agent and liquid seaweed after scarifying	5.5 mm a week before opening, 5 mm on the day; three to four times a week	Cold winds shifting the feed date; frost
May	Into the playing routine: verti-cut every two to three weeks, spike monthly before it, roll weekly or before competitions, move the heads every second day.	First liquid feed at the start of the month; seaweed and wetting agent three weeks later	4 to 5 mm; at least three times a week	Wear on the heads; mower sharpness weekly
June	Peak competition. Drought management: wetting agent, spiking, a proper soak every three days. Mid-season mower sharpen.	Second liquid feed mid-month; seaweed and wetting agent midway	4 to 5 mm; as often as you can	Dry patch, disease, heads
July	As June. Damp the green down before any application and water it in after. Dress worn areas.	Third liquid feed at the end of the month; seaweed and wetting agent midway	4 to 5 mm; as often as you can	Drought stress: stop verti-cutting while it lasts
August	As July. Order everything for the renovation and book the machinery, if you have not already.	Last liquid feed mid-month, early September at the latest	4 to 5 mm; as often as you can	Materials and machines on order
September	Play to the last competition, then renovate the day the green closes: slit, fork the heads, scarify, seed, seaweed meal, top dress. Everything on site by mid-month.	Seaweed meal at the renovation. Charcoal on sour patches.	Up to 6 to 8 mm the day it closes	Close date; thatch depth
October	Finish the renovation, mid-month at the very latest. Watch for the seed germinating. Mow weekly. Start the monthly deep slitting.	Autumn feed, 3.0.12 type, as soon as the seed is through	6 to 8 mm; weekly, then as needed	Germination; early frost; leaves
November	Surrounds tidy, ditches clean, leaves off. Deep slit. Trim in mild spells.	First winter iron from the middle of the month	6 to 8 mm; trim in mild spells	Fusarium; leatherjackets
December	Winter checks as January. Trim overhanging trees. Repair bird damage with a little dressing and seed.	Iron if it is due	6 to 8 mm; trim in mild spells	Standing water: note where it lies

Dates are for central and southern Scotland. Up to two weeks earlier in the south of the UK, later north of central Scotland.

January

Nothing much grows and nothing much needs doing, which is exactly when clubs stop looking at the green. Keep looking. The honest minimum is a walk round once a week and a trim when the weather lets you.

The jobs, in order

1. **Walk the green.** Look for fusarium patches, bird damage, worm casts, standing water and leaves.
2. **Switch off the worm casts** at least once a week, and always before mowing. If they are really bad, iron or sulphur pellets used properly increase the acidity and reduce the casting.
3. **Push off standing water** whenever you can; left lying, it kills grass. Note where it lies. It shows you the low spots to raise with forking and dressing when the time comes.
4. **Keep leaves off.** Scoop them or use a blower. Do not let them lie for any length of time.
5. **Trim** at the winter height whenever you get a mild, reasonably dry spell and the grass has been growing. In at least four directions alternately.
6. **Deep slit** once in the month if the ground allows, chisel tines in between.
7. **Iron** if it is due: four to six weeks after the last one, weather permitting.
8. **Repair bird damage** with a little top dressing and a pinch of seed. Seed will still germinate in a mild spell, even in midwinter.
9. **Ditches clean, surrounds tidy.**
10. **Trim back any trees overhanging the green.** Shade is the big enemy of fine turf. One trim does not last: it has to be done every year, and the winter is the time.

The trigger

A mild spell means a trim. A white frost means nothing at all: not the mower, not the fork, not the sprayer. You can walk on it once the white has gone, but wait for the frost to be out of the surface before you do anything else.

Kit and materials

A sharp mower, set at the winter height. A switch or drag brush. A fork or spiker. A sprayer and sulphate of iron. A bag of dressing and a little seed for repairs. A leaf scoop or blower.

By the end of the month

Tidy, even, no leaves or casts lying, no standing water, the moss darkening where the iron has gone on, and the green still reasonably green. If fusarium shows, it has been spot treated with iron and a little dressing, not left.

February

Mid-February is the time to start planning for the season. The green has weathered the worst of the winter, and it will be obvious where it has suffered. Decide now what needs doing to have a good, uniform surface for April.

The jobs, in order

1. **Examine the green closely** for damage from disease, birds, frost and compaction. Poor drainage shows as yellowing grass at best, dead grass at worst.
2. **Aerate the problem areas**, if not the whole green. A motorised spiker with chisel or knife blades is ideal; a fork and a few volunteers is surprisingly effective. Tines straight down, handle rocked back and forward ten centimetres or so, then move on by the width of the fork for a square pattern of holes. The heads need it most. Run the mower or a light roller over afterwards to level any disruption.
3. **Top dress** any area still uneven, at about a kilo per square metre. Too much at this time of year causes disease.
4. **Charcoal or calcified seaweed** on any area soured by standing water. Both reduce the acidity and help the grass dry out and recover.
5. **The last winter iron**, late in the month, with a little nitrogen. It hardens and greens up the grass, holds disease off and controls the moss.
6. **Mower to the agent** for service and sharpening, urgently if it has not been done. Agents get busy now, and a blunt mower in the run-up to opening is the last thing you need. A blunt mower also has to be tightened up to cut at all, which strains the engine, clutch and bearings.
7. **Trim** in mild spells, and keep switching casts before you mow.
8. **Banks** inspected and repaired with a good quality turf of slow growing grasses. A new bank face may slope slightly inward, never outward.
9. **Ditches** cleaned out now the leaves are down, and the ditch material topped up.
10. **Prune and tidy** shrubs and beds round the green.

The trigger

Mid-month, once the worst of the winter is past. Iron and dressing go on in dry, frost-free weather.

Kit and materials

Fork or spiker, a tonne or so of dressing, charcoal or calcified seaweed, sulphate of iron and the sprayer, turf for the banks, ditch material. The mower, at the agent.

By the end of the month

Every damaged area found and treated, the mower back and sharp, the banks sound, the ditches clear. The moss blackened by the iron and ready to come out in the spring scarify.

March

By the beginning of March, every machine should be serviced and every material for the season in the shed. Then you wait for the first real spell of mild weather, usually mid to late March up here, and the year starts.

The jobs, in order

1. **Check** that everything is in: the spring feed, the liquid feeds, seaweed and wetting agent for the season, dressing for the heads, and the machinery serviced and sharp. Check the rink markers and all the small equipment so you are not caught out on opening day.
2. **Spring feed** in the first mild spell. A high nitrogen, high iron granular feed: 9 to 12% nitrogen with at least 9% iron, no phosphate or potassium. Put it on with a good spreader at the label rate, around 50 g per square metre. The iron kills the moss for easy removal; the nitrogen fills the gaps it leaves. You can make your own: two parts sulphate of ammonia, one part sulphate of iron and five parts dried sand at 35 g per square metre, with a part of seaweed meal added if you want to improve it.
3. **Bring the height down** in half-mil steps from the winter height to about 6 mm by the end of the month, and mowing up to twice a week. No groomer.
4. **Verti-cut** about two weeks after the feed, straight across the green. By then the moss is dead and easy to lift, and the grass is vigorous enough to fill in quickly. A thatch control reel, not the aggressive thatch removal reel, which belongs in the autumn.
5. **Keep spiking**, and keep switching casts before every cut.

The trigger

The first mild spell: when the grass is keen to get moving and the farmers are out feeding their fields. Two weeks earlier in the south of the UK, later north of central Scotland. Still no work on a frosty green.

Kit and materials

The spring feed and a good spreader. The mower, sharp, with a setting bar. The verti-cutter, or a hire booked for the end of the month. Spiker or fork.

By the end of the month

The green greening up and the moss blackened. Height at about 6 mm, cut twice a week, even. Everything for opening day in the shed.

April

This is when the green is made ready for play. Ten days to a fortnight after the feed the grass is strong enough to take the spring work, and from there it is a steady drop in height and a steady rise in mowing until the members walk on.

The jobs, in order

1. **Spike** with chisel or pencil tines, ten to fourteen days after the spring feed, **then scarify** to lift the dead moss and open the sward. Thatch control reel, not thatch removal.
2. **Mow** to pick up the debris.
3. **Top dress** the heads, at a kilo or so per square metre, and any thin areas.
4. **Wetting agent and liquid seaweed**, sprayed after the scarifying.
5. **Height down** half a mil a week over the first two weeks, mowing three to four times a week. A week before opening, down to 5.5 mm and cut three times over the week; on opening day, 5 mm. Keep the mower sharp.
6. **Finish the small repairs** that are still outstanding.
7. **Roll** on the morning of opening day if you have a suitable roller: a dual or triple pedestrian roller that spreads its weight, not a big single roller, which rides over the undulations and levels nothing.
8. **Set the heads** and start moving them.

The trigger

Counting from the feed: spike and scarify at ten to fourteen days. Cold winds at this time of year can shift when things go on; let them. Still no work on the green when it is frosty.

Kit and materials

Spiker and scarifier, or a hire booked for the first week. Dressing for the heads. Wetting agent and liquid seaweed, and the sprayer. Rink markers, mats, jacks, and the roller if you have one.

By the end of the month

In play, and looking really good. Down to 4 or 5 mm depending on where you are, cut three to four times a week, heads dressed and moving.

May

The start of May is the start of the feeding programme and of the routine that runs to the end of the season: feed lightly and often, keep water moving through the surface, keep the mower sharp, and keep the heads moving.

The jobs, in order

1. **First liquid feed** at the start of the month. 2.5 to 4 litres of product per green in about 50 litres of water: two fills of a 25 litre pedestrian sprayer, half a green to a fill. Run a fill of plain water first to find the walking pace that covers half a green, then mix for that area. Spike and verti-cut just before it.
2. **Verti-cut every two to three weeks** from now on, alternating the direction between opposite corners. Once a month, spike with chisel or solid tines before the verti-cut. Not deep slits: in summer they open up and dry the green out.
3. **Mow** at 4 to 5 mm as often as you can, three times a week at the very least. If you are not mowing on a morning, switch or brush the dew and debris off before play.
4. **Roll** weekly, or before competitions.
5. **Check the mower** for sharpness and setting once a week at least, preferably every day.
6. **Move the heads** every second day, at least a metre, three settings; more often in wet weather or heavy play. If wear shows after a move, a little dressing on it, weekly if needed.
7. **Seaweed and wetting agent** three weeks after the feed, at half rate, with a light spike and verti-cut before it.
8. **Watering** in dry weather: soak thoroughly every three days or so rather than a little every night, so the water reaches the roots. Spiking and wetting agent are what get it there.

The trigger

The date starts it; the weather adjusts it. A mild, damp spell uses up the nutrients faster, so the six-week gap can shorten. In a dry spell you need far less on.

Kit and materials

The pedestrian sprayer, calibrated. Liquid feed, liquid seaweed and wetting agent for the season. Verti-cutter, spiker, roller. Dressing for the heads.

By the end of the month

Firm, true and an even colour. The heads holding grass because they are being moved and dressed. The mower cutting clean.

June

Peak competition, and the first month the weather can turn against you. Drought management is the summer job, and it is won or lost by the spiking you did through the winter.

The jobs, in order

1. **Second liquid feed** around the middle of the month, six weeks after the first, with a light spike and verti-cut before it. Damp the green down a little before any application and water it in afterwards if you can.
2. **Seaweed and wetting agent** three weeks later.
3. **Water** to keep the grass alive, not to keep it bright green; a soft, lush green damages easily and roots shallow. Soak the root zone every three days or so, early in the night when less is lost to the air. In very high temperatures a one-minute spray during the day cools the canopy, and the soak can go to every second night.
4. **Keep verti-cutting** every two to three weeks, except while the grass is stressed by drought.
5. **Mid-season sharpen.** Halfway through the season most mowers need a sharpen, and possibly a new bottom blade, to keep the finish. Have the back-up machine ready.
6. **Heads** looked at nearly every week. Wear showing means move the head off it now, spike the worn area a little and dress it.
7. **Disease.** Keep an eye out. Spot treat any patch with a little sulphate of iron; it is one of the best disease killers there is. Keep a fungicide on hand for a bad attack.
8. **Roll** before the big competitions.

The trigger

Six weeks from the last feed, adjusted for the weather. Dry patch showing, or the surface shedding water, means wetting agent and spiking now, not next week.

Kit and materials

As May, plus the irrigation working and tested, and a spare bottom blade or the back-up mower.

By the end of the month

No dry patch, the surface taking water, a consistent pace across the green, and the competitions played on a surface the visitors talk about.

July

The same routine as June, and the same enemy. The green that was spiked all winter and fed lightly all spring is the one that comes through July looking the same at the end as it did at the start.

The jobs, in order

1. **Third liquid feed** at the end of the month, six weeks after the second, with the light spike and verti-cut before it. Damp down first, water in after.
2. **Seaweed and wetting agent** at the midpoint between feeds.
3. **Watering** as June: a proper soak every three days, more often only in extreme heat.
4. **Verti-cut** every two to three weeks unless the grass is under drought stress, in which case leave it until the stress has passed.
5. **Mow** at 4 to 5 mm as often as you can. Switch the dew before play on the days you do not mow.
6. **Heads**: move them, look at them weekly, dress any wear.
7. **Roll** weekly or before competitions, as long as the spiking is keeping pace with it.
8. **Disease and worms**. Spot treat any patch with iron. Switch casts before every cut.

The trigger

The feed date, then the weather. Put materials on when conditions are reasonably suitable, not on the day the calendar says if the green is bone dry or sodden.

Kit and materials

As May and June. Check how much liquid feed, seaweed and wetting agent is left for August.

By the end of the month

The same green as the end of June. If the heads are thinning or the colour is patchy, the answer is nearly always water getting to the roots, not more feed.

August

The last of the summer feeds, and the month to get the autumn organised. Everything for the renovation has to be ordered now, and the bigger machines booked, or they will not be there when the green closes.

The jobs, in order

1. **Last liquid feed** around the middle of the month, early September at the latest.
2. **Seaweed and wetting agent** three weeks after it.
3. **Order the renovation materials**: the top dressing sand (about three tonnes, up to six if you will be hollow coring), the seed for the heads, the seaweed meal, the autumn feed, charcoal if you have sour patches. Have them on site by the middle of September.
4. **Book the machinery**. A verti-drain, if one is recommended, is booked several months ahead, and it is a tractor mounted machine, so be sure it will get through the gate. Scarifier and spiker hires likewise.
5. **Carry on** with the routine: verti-cut, spike monthly, mow as often as you can, roll before competitions, move and dress the heads, water properly.
6. **Judge the thatch** so you know how hard the autumn scarify needs to be: cut a small plug from a quiet corner and look at the brown spongy layer between leaf and soil. Under a centimetre, one light pass will do; well over that, two passes at right angles.

The trigger

Six weeks from the July feed. For the ordering, the calendar: mid-August, whatever the weather is doing.

Kit and materials

As the rest of the season. Plus the order confirmations for the sand, seed, seaweed meal and autumn feed, and the hire bookings.

By the end of the month

The green still fresh and green, a little wear on the heads, which is normal. The renovation planned, ordered and booked.

September

September is a playing month right up to the last competition, and then it is the renovation. The quicker the work is done after the green closes, the better the recovery, because everything that follows relies on the grass having growing time left before the frosts.

The jobs, in order

1. **Play to the last competition**, keeping the green in good order: the last summer feed on by early September, cutting and dressing the heads as usual.
2. **Everything on site by the middle of the month**: sand, seed, seaweed meal, autumn feed, and the machinery confirmed.
3. **Close the green**. Many clubs close mid-September, many at the end of the month or the first week of October. A mid-September close makes it much easier: the grass is still growing strongly. If the club has two greens, close one a fortnight earlier and start on that.
4. **The day it closes, raise the height of cut** to 6 to 8 mm and start the renovation, in this order:



Typical wear on a head by the end of the season. The renovation is what puts it right.

1. **Aerate**. Slit tine the whole green, always in the same direction. Hand fork the worn heads. Hollow core or verti-drain only for a real reason.
2. **Scarify** as hard as the thatch needs: one light pass under a centimetre of thatch, two passes at right angles for much more. Clear the debris off as you go; left lying, it invites fusarium.
3. **Overseed** the heads and worn areas straight away while the surface is open, 25 g per square metre of a fine fescue and bent mix. Rake it in so it touches soil and work it into the fork holes. No ryegrass, ever.
4. **Seaweed meal** at 50 g per square metre, over the whole green if you can. Charcoal on any wet, sour patches, with a little extra forking.
5. **Top dress** with a tested medium-coarse straight sand at about 2 kg per square metre, roughly three tonnes, and brush it in with a drag mat or lute on a dry day until the surface is true and any core holes are filled. A dressing left sitting on the sward smothers it. Clubs nearly always under-dress: get it on. The heads want a little extra.

The trigger

The close of play. Not the next committee meeting. Latest start, anywhere in the UK: the middle of October.

Kit and materials

Slitter or spiker, forks, scarifier, seed, seaweed meal, charcoal, three tonnes of sand, drag mat or lute, and the mower set up to 6 to 8 mm.

By the end of the month

Before closing: healthy, fresh and green, with a bit of wear on the heads. After closing: renovated, or everything in place to start the day the last bowl is played.

October

Either the renovation is finished, which is ideal, or you are straight into it. Then the job is watching for the new grass, feeding it at the right moment, and easing the green into its winter routine.

The jobs, in order

1. **Finish the renovation** if it is not done, following the September order. The middle of October is the latest start anywhere in the UK; the earlier it is done, the more recovery you get.
2. **Watch for germination**, two to three weeks after seeding.
3. **The autumn feed goes on when the seed is through**, not before. Low nitrogen, no phosphate, high potassium: NPK 3.0.12 or thereabouts, with magnesium, iron and seaweed. Put it on before the seedlings are up and it pushes the old grass, which smothers them. Put it on as they emerge and you feed the old sward and the new grass together. Do not be tempted by a spring feed left in the shed; a flush of soft growth now is what fusarium is waiting for.
4. **Mow weekly** at 6 to 8 mm to the end of the month. Do not be frightened of cutting the new grass: it comes to no harm as long as the mower is sharp, which it should be at all times. In at least four directions alternately.
5. **Start the monthly deep slitting** that runs to March, chisel tines in between.
6. **Leaves off, casts switched, standing water pushed off.**
7. **Leatherjackets.** If they are a known problem, this is the window: nematodes in September and October while the soil is still above about twelve degrees, or the licensed product Acelepryn in late October to early November, spiked in beforehand and applied by a certificated contractor. One litre does up to eight applications on a green, so it is worth sharing with other clubs.

The trigger

The seed coming through is the trigger for the feed. The mower is the trigger for itself: if it is sharp, cut.

Kit and materials

The autumn feed and the spreader. The mower at 6 to 8 mm, sharp. The slitter. Leaf scoop or blower.

By the end of the month

Looking pretty healthy: the full sward, new grass included, growing well and looking fresh, unless there have been very early frosts, which is unusual but more likely the further north you are. The grass not allowed to get long. The winter programme under way.

November

The green is closed and recovered, and the work turns to keeping it clean, dry and hard through the winter. The iron programme starts towards the end of the month.

The jobs, in order

1. **Surrounds tidy and ditches clean.** The leaves are coming down now; do not let them build up on the green or in the ditches.
2. **Trim** at 6 to 8 mm whenever there is a mild dry spell and growth to take off.
3. **Deep slit** once, if the ground allows.
4. **First winter iron** from the middle to the end of the month: dissolved sulphate of iron at 5 kg per green through the sprayer, in dry, frost-free weather. A little urea with it if the green needs it, but only if needed. This is the first of at least three, four to six weeks apart, to late February.
5. **Disease.** If the year's programme has been followed there should be very little. Any fusarium that shows, spot treat with a strong sulphate of iron spray, 2.5 to 3 kg to a knapsack fill, on the patches only. There is no need to do the whole green.
6. **Worm casts** switched weekly. **Standing water** pushed off and noted.
7. **Leatherjackets:** the Acelepryn window runs to early November if you are using it.

The trigger

The second half of the month for the iron, and a dry, frost-free day to put it on. Frost, a very wet spell or high wind will all stop you, so take the day when it comes.

Kit and materials

Sulphate of iron for the winter, the sprayer, a little urea. The mower, the slitter, the switch, the leaf scoop.

By the end of the month

Still reasonably green, the sward healthy overall, the surrounds tidy and the ditches clear. The first iron on.

December

The quietest month, and the one where the committee stops thinking about the green. Keep a check on it, keep it clean, and get the trees done.

The jobs, in order

1. **Walk the green** weekly: disease, bird damage, casts, standing water, leaves.
2. **Repair bird damage** with a little top dressing and a pinch of seed. Germination is much reduced over the winter, but it still happens in a mild spell anywhere in the UK, so it is worth doing.
3. **Leaves off, casts switched, water pushed off.**
4. **Trim** in mild dry spells at the winter height.
5. **Deep slit** once if the ground allows.
6. **Iron** if it is due, four to six weeks after the November application, weather permitting.
7. **Trim back overhanging trees.** The last thing you want is branches over the green. Shade is the big enemy of turf grass, and one trim does not keep them back for long: every year.
8. **Ditches** kept clear as the last of the leaves come down.

The trigger

A mild spell for the trim and the iron. A white frost for doing nothing at all. Neither for walking off and leaving it until February.

Kit and materials

As January: the mower, the switch, the fork or splitter, the sprayer and iron, a bag of dressing and a little seed, the leaf scoop, and a saw for the trees.

By the end of the month

Clean, tidy, no water lying, the moss darkening, any bird damage repaired, and the trees back off the green. The same in January, and then February is where the planning starts again.

Rates and quantities for one green

One full size green of about 1,500 square metres. Always check the label: these are what the green needs, and the product tells you how much of it delivers that.

What	When	Rate	Notes
Spring feed, 9.0.0 with 11% iron (or 9 to 12% N with 9% or more Fe)	Mid to late March, first mild spell	About 50 g per square metre; label rate	Three 25 kg bags does a green. Home mix: 2 parts sulphate of ammonia, 1 sulphate of iron, 5 dried sand at 35 g per square metre.
Liquid feed with seaweed	Start of May, then every six weeks or so to mid-August	2.5 to 4 litres per green in about 50 litres of water	Two fills of a 25 litre pedestrian sprayer. Calibrate with water first. Four feeds a season.
Liquid seaweed and wetting agent	Three weeks after each feed; after the April scarify; after the renovation	Half rate between feeds, full rate after the renovation	The seaweed conditions the soil so the feed is used; the wetting agent keeps water moving.
Seed, fine fescue and bent, no ryegrass	At the renovation; a pinch on winter repairs	25 g per square metre on the heads and worn areas	Straight after scarifying while the surface is open. Rake in, work into the fork holes.
Seaweed meal	At the renovation	50 g per square metre	Over the whole green if you can, the heads at least.
Autumn feed, NPK 3.0.12 type with Mg, Fe and seaweed	Two to three weeks after the renovation, when the seed has germinated	Label rate, about 50 g per square metre	Potassium anywhere from 12 to 20% is fine. Not before germination.
Sulphate of iron, dissolved	Every four to six weeks, mid-November to late February	5 kg per green in water, through the sprayer	Aim for three applications. Lawn sand does the same job (about 50 kg a green, 7 g per square metre) but is getting hard to buy.
Sulphate of iron, disease spot spray	Whenever fusarium shows	2.5 to 3 kg to a knapsack fill	Patches only, never the whole green. A little dressing on the patch as well.
Top dressing, medium-coarse tested sand	Renovation	About 2 kg per square metre, roughly 3 tonnes; up to 6 if hollow cored	At least three quarters of the sand in the 0.5 to 0.75 mm range. Keep some back.
Top dressing	February, on uneven or damaged areas	About 1 kg per square metre	Too much at this time of year causes disease.
Top dressing	Spring, on the heads; then monthly in play	A kilo or so per square metre in spring; a little each month	Keep a supply in stock for the heads all season.
Charcoal or calcified seaweed	February, and at the renovation	On soured patches	Reduces acidity where water has stood; helps the grass dry out and recover.

Heights of cut through the year are on the "figures" page near the front.

If you would rather have some help

I am Duncan Gray. I was head greenkeeper at Lahinch in Ireland, then Fine Turf Superintendent for Kyle and Carrick in Ayrshire, in charge of eight golf courses and nine bowling greens. Those greens included Ayr Northfield, which went from never having hosted a national event to staging Scottish and British championships and then the men's and women's World Championships, both televised, on turf I prepared. I have advised bowling clubs across Ayrshire and beyond for over twenty years, and I still look after greens today.



Double mowing at Northfield for the World Championships.

The bowling green package: £995 for one green for one year, delivered

Everything in this calendar in one delivery: the spring feed, the liquid feeds, the seaweed and wetting agent, the autumn feed, the seaweed meal and seed for the renovation, the sulphate of iron for the winter, the written programme with the rates and timings for your green, and me at the other end of the phone all year. It lets a committee budget the whole year's turf in one figure. lawnsforyou.com/fine-turf/bowling-greens/bowling-green-special-offer

A visit, or ongoing advice

If the green has been let go, or the club wants a programme written for its own soil, its own budget and its own volunteers, I can come and walk it with you, or advise by phone and email through the year.

lawnsforyou.com/fine-turf/bowling-green-maintenance-service

The products

The spring feed, the liquid feed, the seaweed meal, the bowling green seed mix and the soluble sulphate of iron are all in the shop at lawnsforyou.com/shop, delivered anywhere in the UK.

Get in touch

Duncan Gray, Lawns For You

Phone: **07801 301712**

Email: duncan@lawnsforyou.com

Web: www.lawnsforyou.com

The Bowling Green Year, 2026 to 2027 edition. Written by Duncan Gray for Lawns For You. Free to copy and print for your own club. The dates suit central and southern Scotland; adjust up to two weeks earlier in the south of the UK and later north of central Scotland. Updated as the year goes on; the latest copy is always at lawnsforyou.com/fine-turf/years-maintenance-bowling-green.