



# Amenity Forum Guidance Document

## Best Practice Note for Integrated Control

### Integrated Control – what is it and why practice it?

1. A definition of integration is the process of bringing all parts together to achieve objectives. In the world of pest, disease and weed control in the amenity sector, the phrase integrated control has certainly come to the fore but exactly what does it entail and why the increase in interest?
2. There are various definitions of integrated control. However, perhaps it can be best expressed as *'the control of pests, weeds and diseases by a combination of cultural, biological and genetic methods alongside chemical use'*. Let us be clear now that integrated control does not mean that we don't use pesticides. It is however, about making the most effective use of chemicals by ensuring other conditions are optimum and, where it makes sense, adopting non chemical measures alongside pesticide use. The emphasis in pest control should always be on risk minimisation, cost effectiveness and, very importantly, on water protection.
3. So that is a brief description of the what, so we can now turn to the why. It is mainly for two reasons. The first is that it is now required as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive (SUD) in the UK, coupled with requirements under the Water Framework Directive and other related regulations. Within the National Action Plan, arising from SUD enactment in the UK, there is a specific focus on amenity and it seeks to *'ensure that the principles of integrated control are adopted by all professional users'*. Indeed, in certain specified areas, close to watercourses and other environmentally sensitive places, it is a requirement that users can fully demonstrate and evidence that they considered all methods of control.
4. A second reason for taking an integrated approach is that it can prove cost effective and reduce risk. It can ensure pesticide use is properly targeted and the process of control is the most efficient. As an example of this, glyphosate is a vitally important active ingredient for chemical control in amenity. Yet there are concerns expressed by external bodies about the amount of runoff and levels found in water. Whilst we can argue that this is not the fault of amenity alone or indeed query the findings, it is vital that users of this active ingredient, in whatever form, really target its application, avoid run off and ideally ensure that it is used as part of an integrated approach to control.
5. In terms of cultural approaches, clearly processes involving hand weeding are rarely practical financially but the right approaches to managing and planning amenity areas can have a real impact on reducing the need for pest and weed control. Recently a local authority in the Midlands has completely redesigned its many attractive flower and plant beds in its area, choosing lower maintenance varieties, using mulching to reduce weed infestation and in other ways. Similar approaches might be adopted when looking at new hard surfacing, thinking what is best for weed control both short and long term. We also need to fully consider biological options. The Forum recently presented at a conference on the topic of sports turf microbial management. It was fascinating to hear of research being undertaken. Yes of course to some, it may still seem somewhat divorced from the everyday pressures of maintaining say sports pitches to the standard required. Pesticides are often the most effective and cost least but, as said previously, if we are to protect the availability of the limited chemicals we have in amenity, we need to ensure the 'integrated' approach, ensuring all pesticides are used to maximum effect and with little if any damage to the environment. At the conference, of course views were wide and varied, but there was agreement and understanding that all such options need to be considered.

6. The amenity sector is a wide and varied one but extremely important. As a sector, we must demonstrate our ability to follow very best practice and ensure the highest standards. Whilst there are many who operate at such levels, there remain those who are not aware of recent legislative changes and modern requirements. Amenity is under the spotlight. Government's recent public statements on the importance of our sector are to be welcomed but, in turn, this increases our responsibilities. It is much better than those operating in the sector implement change themselves rather than have it imposed by others with all the implications this brings. Go ask some of our European counterparts who already operate much more in an environment of being told what they can or cannot do. We need the whole sector to ensure it has 'upped its game'. Regardless of legal enforcement, it is up to all of us to show our professionalism and, to use the already limited pesticide product range we have, in a highly professional manner with well documented procedures and making such decisions in an integrated way.
7. The Amenity Forum is the national voluntary initiative for the amenity sector. It is a non-profit organisation funded by the industry through membership subscriptions. It seeks to promote best practice, providing support and guidance and seeking to ensure the whole sector can demonstrate its importance and commitment to the highest standards in weed, pest and disease control. We are the voice for the sector in all such matters. Our membership already contains a wide range of organisations including pesticide manufacturers, distributors, operators, local authority, golf and sports bodies and more. It is very important that we bring everyone behind the cause.
8. Times may be changing in the world of pest, disease and weed control but the requirements remain the same, effective control both in terms of operations and cost. Pesticides will remain central to control but we also must take heed of the need for more integrated approaches. We need to do that ourselves through our own efforts so we are in control and not others.