



Felled leylandii are loaded by crane and grapple into the Ecogreen composter.

*One of Britain's leading visitor attractions has adopted an environmentally and financially-sound solution to deal with its green waste arisings. AME reports from Tamworth.*

**A**fter two years' hard work, the Zago Ecogreen composting machine used by Drayton Manor Theme Park is well on its way to repaying the initial investment made by the award-winning attraction, set within 115ha of beautiful Staffordshire countryside.

Supplied and supported by UK distributor, Kingfeeders, the Ecogreen composter was purchased specifically by Drayton Manor as a fast and effective means of minimising all of the enterprise's green waste, producing a thoroughly-mixed compost for planting purposes and a friable, easy-to-handle mulch for weed control.

"The machine does both jobs extremely well and is saving Drayton Manor a lot of money as a result," explained estate co-ordinator, Gaynor Pope. "It has reduced significantly the need to purchase compost for planting and has cut the cost of bought-in bark mulch from more than £10,000 a year in 2006 to zero today."

In producing a ready-to-use mulch, the Ecogreen has also reduced the need to spray many of the large borders found within the estate which, in addition to a

theme park, features a thriving zoo and extensive areas of woodland and amenity grass.

Responsibility for day-to-day Ecogreen operations lies with Drayton Manor's grounds maintenance supervisor, Nigel Stubbs, plus three staff.

"We wanted a machine that could deal comfortably with plant and tree prunings, weedings, replaced plants and other green waste from the estate, including the zoo," explained Nigel. "Of particular importance was the ability to handle the droppings from those animals which are fed entirely on vegetable matter, along with the worn-out tree boughs that are used by climbing animals."

A demonstration by Kingfeeders of the Ecogreen provided more than adequate proof that the machine could handle just about everything that could be loaded into it.

Supplied as standard with a foldable unloading conveyor, the 11 cu metre Ecogreen ordered by Drayton Manor Theme Park was specified also with the optional loading crane and grapple.

"Being able to self-load the composter

with green matter removes the need for a separate loader tractor or telescopic handler," explained Nigel. "The machine is powered entirely by a 120hp tractor with its engine speed set to deliver the required 540rpm at the power take-off. It's a very good match."

The maximum diameter of material that Nigel is prepared to load into the Ecogreen is an impressive 200mm. Anything bigger, and it is possible that a safety shearbolt



Grounds maintenance supervisor, Nigel Stubbs, with a sample of ready-to-use weed control mulch produced from tree prunings in less than an hour by the Ecogreen machine.

could break, he says. "And that can mean half an hour or so out of action. Anyway, 200mm, or eight inches, is pretty big by any standards."

As for length, Nigel aims to keep material between 1.8m and 2.4m for optimum break-down by the machine's twin revolving augers, whose flights are fitted with around 50 heavy-duty cutting/grinding teeth.

Located at the base of the hopper, the two main augers are complemented by a pair of smaller augers mounted higher up the hopper's sides which push woody and green material back towards the centre of the hopper and the main munching/composting zone.

A full load of general estate prunings,

branches and waste material takes around 45 minutes to be broken down sufficiently for use as a weed control mulch on beds and borders.

The 20 cu metres of green matter and animal droppings collected each week from the zoo are all destined for use as a compost. After thorough treatment by Ecogreen, the material is left in manageable piles which are turned regularly to break down further before being worked into the many planted borders at Drayton Manor.

Nigel and two of his staff have gained recognised tree surgeon and tree climbing qualifications, enabling all of the arboricultural work at Drayton Manor to be carried out in-house, before minimisation of the debris by Ecogreen.

"The park is open each year from March to the end of October," commented Nigel. "This means that much of the estate maintenance is carried out over winter when there are no visitors in the public areas where there is work to be carried out."

"Although this makes our job easier and safer, it gives the Ecogreen virtually no rest. In fact, the machine works harder from November through to February than at any other time of the year. To my mind, it's a fantastic bit of kit which has brought major cost and environmental benefits to the park and our maintenance schedules."

● [www.kingfeeders.co.uk](http://www.kingfeeders.co.uk)

● [www.zago-srl.com](http://www.zago-srl.com)

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