

TURF TWISTERS

IMPROPER TIMING OF

Question: Everyone on our Green Committee is well aware of the importance of proper timing of certain maintenance activities. Our intentions and tentative plans are always good, but it seems that year after year golfing events force aerification work further into the fall than is ideal. I doubt we are the only club with this type of problem. How would you suggest we approach this situation? (Maryland)

Answer: The fact that your Green Committee is aware of the importance of maintenance work timing is very commendable. We encourage you to communicate this actively to the Golf Committee, which has to schedule golf events in the first place, and to the pro shop. Get together with the Golf Committee and pro shop staff during the winter months and place your maintenance activities on the club's calendar as the highest priority. With maintenance work on the calendar, golfing events can be added where appropriate. As an added measure, schedule a rain date for your maintenance work, just like any golfing event. This approach will help prevent golfing events from dictating your maintenance work.

CRITICAL MAINTENANCE

Question: I just can't believe bentgrass can utilize all the nitrogen I have had to apply to our new greens during the grow-in period. What's up? (Minnesota)

Answer: Probably your water use. It is very easy to overwater new, high-sand greens, resulting in soluble nutrients being leached from the root zone. Try to determine just how little water is needed to keep the surface moist. Several light sprinklings during daylight hours usually will suffice once the entire profile is moistened. As the root system develops, the frequency can be reduced. You should also be aware that high pH levels may limit the availability of nitrogen from some slow-release sources, and low microbiological activity in the root zone can slow the N release from other sources.

MAKES FOR DIFFICULT PLAY

Question: We have an old links-style golf course with many mounds or "chocolate drops" that are left unmaintained in the roughs. Over the years many have become overgrown with different varieties of weeds and unwanted vegetation, making for very difficult play. Any suggestions on how to return these areas to their original state without losing too much of the old fescue mix that we'd like to keep? (New York)

Answer: Controlled burning during winter dormancy historically has been used for eliminating unwanted vegetation and keeping naturalized rough areas playable. However, burning can damage more delicate fine fescues, and permits may be impossible to obtain. Several broadleaf herbicides are available and can be applied in mid-spring or early fall to safely control weeds on the mounds. Invading shrubs may have to be removed by hand or treated with a nonselective herbicide. Mowing the naturalized areas in late fall also will help control weeds and improve playability if burning is impossible.