

COVERING YOUR TRACKS

How to sod a damaged green.

by PAUL VERMEULEN

EVERY NOW AND THEN, a green is damaged; vandals sneak onto the course at night and rip up a hole location, Mother Nature wields a quick blow, 300 golfers trample an area on a hot afternoon, hot oil from a piece of equipment spills on the turf. You name it — it happens.

If luck is on your side, the damage is minimal and with a little effort it can be repaired with a hole cutter, or perhaps the scars will simply heal on their own given a little patience. If your luck runs out, however, you have to take out the sod cutter and make repairs. On such occasions you can use the *Hood Method* of sodding to avoid leaving conspicuous scars in the putting surface that golfers might discuss at the 19th hole to add insult to turf injury.

The Hood Method was developed by Lee Hood, CGCS, superintendent of Coto De Caza Golf Course in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. The sodding method is a step-by-step procedure to replace damaged areas without losing subtle surface contours. One important requisite for sodding greens is having a sod nursery that is identical to the damaged green. If the nursery is established with a different turfgrass species (e.g., creeping bentgrass when the greens are dominated by *Poa annua*), then the mismatch in the appearance of the sod will highlight the damaged area for years. Another difference could be that the nursery has not been topdressed on a regular schedule to prevent an excessive thatch buildup. In this case, the condition of the putting surface would be inconsistent or the newly laid sod might scalp when mowed.

The basic steps for completing the Hood Method are as follows:

Step 1: Measure the damaged area to determine how many linear feet of sod will be required for the project. For example, if the sod cutter harvests



To repair a damaged area, remove and replace one strip of sod at a time to preserve subtle surface contours. Do not readjust the cutting gauge on the sod cutter between harvesting sod from the nursery and removing damaged areas, so that the freshly harvested sod will fit into the green without the addition or removal of soil.

strips that are 18" wide and the length of the damaged area is 20 feet, then a total of 120 linear feet of sod is required for the project. (See Diagram 1.)

Step 2: Harvest and transport sod from the nursery to the work site, taking great care to prevent soil loss.

Replace bent or worn sod cutter blades before sod harvesting to ensure uniform thickness. If a bent or worn blade is used to harvest sod, the repaired area will have corresponding waves on the surface that will provoke scalping during daily mowing.

Step 3: Remove the first strip of sod from the center of the damaged area. Do not readjust the cutting gauge on the sod cutter so that the freshly harvested sod will fit into the damaged area without the addition or removal of soil.

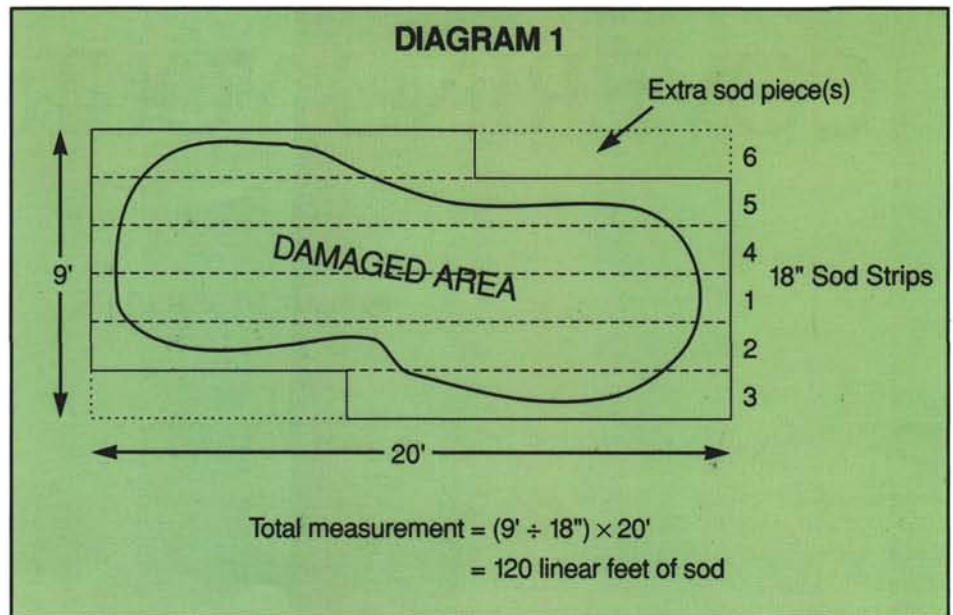
Step 4: Square off the ends of the strip with a sod knife or spade, and level the soil with a cement trowel. If necessary, use a small sheet of plywood to avoid heavy footprinting or kneeling marks in the putting surface.

Step 5: Carefully install the freshly harvested sod in the open strip.

Step 6: Remove the remaining strips of sod from the damaged area one at a time and repeat Steps 4 and 5 before moving on to the next strip.

Step 7: Fill in the seams between each strip with a small amount of sand topdressing.

Step 8: Roll or tamp the fresh sod before mowing.



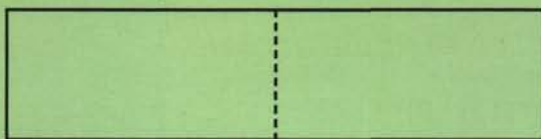
To determine the linear feet of sod required for repairing a green, divide the width of the damaged area by the width of the sod cutter blade and multiply by the length of the damaged area.

Square off the ends of the strip with a sod knife or spade, and level the soil with a cement trowel. If necessary, use a small sheet of plywood to avoid heavy footprinting or kneeling marks in the putting surface.



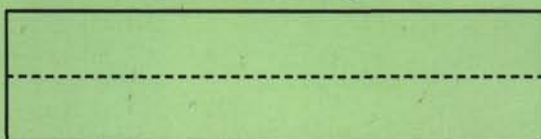
DIAGRAM 2

Sod piece divided widthwise



YES

Sod piece divided lengthwise



NO

Avoid using sod pieces that have been divided lengthwise when repairing the outer edges of damaged areas using the Hood Method. If the outer edge of the damaged area only requires a thin strip of sod to complete the repairs, it is best to install pieces that have been divided widthwise.

When using the Hood Method for repairing damaged areas, try to work with sod pieces that have not been divided lengthwise to repair outer edges of damaged areas. (See Diagram 2.) If the outer edge of the damaged area requires only a thin strip of sod to complete the repairs, it is nonetheless best to install pieces that have been divided widthwise.

The next time your luck runs out and you have to take out the sod cutter and make repairs, remember that one of the best ways to avoid leaving conspicuous scars in the putting surface is to remove one strip at a time.

PAUL VERMEULEN joined the USGA Green Section in 1988 as agronomist for the Western Region. In 1995, he transferred to the Mid-Continent Region.

After completing the installation of each strip of sod, continue removing subsequent strips until the damaged area is repaired. Work with whole sod pieces along the outer edges of a damaged area to ensure a perfect fit.

