

TURF TWISTERS

PLAN ON

Question: We are in the process of developing a master plan for our cart paths. During the discussions, a question arose regarding the width. My committee prefers narrow paths that are less visible and have less of an impact on play. What is your opinion? (New York)

Answer: The minimum suggested width for cart paths is eight feet. In areas where there is two-way traffic or where maintenance equipment frequently travels, the paths should be wider (12 feet or more) to allow for ease of passage and to minimize the chance of wear occurring off the cart path.

MONITORING

Question: We rebuilt our greens to USGA specifications three years ago and since then the infiltration rate has decreased from 17 inches per hour (when new) to 7 inches per hour. Aerification helps, but within a month infiltration drops again. What's most alarming is the formation of a layer high in clay, silt, and organic matter immediately below the turf surface (within the top inch). What can we do to improve our situation? (Texas)

Answer: Check the water source that you are using to irrigate the greens. You may be pumping water high in suspended solids. An easy way to test the water is to fill a graduated cylinder and let it stand undisturbed for three or four days. The suspended solids will settle on the bottom. If you have muddy water, you may be able to correct the situation by installing a floating intake and/or a filter on the pump station. Once the water quality is improved, begin an aggressive core aerification program to slowly reduce the effects of the layering. In severe cases, the best course of action is to remove the surface layer and replant.

STUDENTS AS AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

Question: We have heard that there are a number of university turf students who look for summer work. In fact, many need this type of employment to complete their curriculum requirements. How can we best tap into this resource to benefit the turf maintenance program at our course? (Maryland)

Answer: Begin by contacting universities that offer turfgrass management programs. Provide information to the university about the requirements of your prospective employees. Generally, if there is an opportunity for the students to be involved with a wide array of turfgrass management techniques and practices, they will be eager to come on board. The employee and the employer will gain the most when their job duties are clearly defined.

One of the major stumbling blocks in attracting turf students to an intern program is housing. If there is local housing available, this should be clearly stated when announcements are sent to universities. If you are truly interested in establishing a strong intern program for the future, you may even want to invest in a two- or three-bedroom trailer that can be parked near or on the property.