

TURF TWISTERS

HAZARD AHEAD —

Question: We use a variety of stakes to mark our water hazards. Unfortunately, the stakes can be difficult to maintain and keep in place. Are there better options for marking our hazards? (New Hampshire)

Answer: A painted line can be used to define the margin of a water hazard. Several indicator stakes would then be placed well inside the line to help players identify from a distance whether the body of water is a water hazard (yellow stakes) or lateral water hazard (red stakes). Wooden indicator stakes also can be equipped with a metal post or spike to ease their installation. Using a painted line to define water hazards reduces the number of stakes required, and those stakes that are used as indicators can be placed in areas where they are less likely to interfere with play and mowing activities. If you use both stakes and lines, be sure to clarify on the local rules sheet that the lines define the hazard margins and that the stakes only identify the hazard.

PUTTING GREEN

Question: Our golf course is located in the mountains and we only have a six-month golf season (May through October). Is the fall plugging of the putting greens absolutely necessary if our membership expects high quality surfaces at this time? (North Carolina)

Answer: With the shorter golf season in your area, it is perfectly understandable that the membership would desire smooth putting surfaces throughout the play season. *Double aerifying* the putting greens during the scheduled April aeration is one option. This operation will produce twice as many holes, but not twice the work or twice the recovery time. Use the largest size tines possible, preferably at least ½ inch. Obviously, remove the aeration plugs and backfill the holes with sand topdressing. The putting surfaces will be bumpier after this double aeration, but the course is closed and you can anticipate a satisfactory recovery by the May opening golf date.

RENOVATION

Question: We are considering replanting our greens. One question that is frequently asked is, How quickly can we open the greens after we plant them? (Missouri)

Answer: Opening dates vary widely depending on many factors, including climate, planting date, fertilization rates, type of grass, amount of play anticipated, type of rootzone mixture, etc. A good method to determine whether or not the green is ready for play is to examine the green's profile using a profile tool or cup changer. In order for the new turf to withstand traffic, there must be a pad or thin layer of organic matter between the crown of the turfgrass plant and the underlying rootzone material. This pad is developed as the green matures. When the pad has reached approximately ¼ inch in thickness, the green is usually ready. As a very general rule, bentgrass takes 14 to 16 weeks of good growing weather to develop such a pad. Bermudagrass is slightly faster and often develops the pad over 12 to 14 weeks of good growing weather. Please note the phrase *good growing weather*. This is weather that provides ideal growing conditions for the turfgrass selected.