

Turf Twisters

Q: I would like to aerify my fairways and roughs during the winter to take maximum advantage of winter rainfall to leach salts and sodium. My main concern is that the holes will not recover during the winter and I will be left with a big mess. Do you have any suggestions on what I can do? (California)



A: Consider a less disruptive form of cultivation such as slicing or solid-tine aeration during the winter. You will

avoid most of the mess and still be able to break through surface crust for more effective leaching of soluble salts and sodium. Schedule routine core aeration in the spring and fall when the turf is actively growing for quick recovery of the aeration holes.

Q: Several of my putting greens suffer from tree root competition. How can I prune the tree roots to help the turf without sacrificing tree health? (Rhode Island)

A: Tree roots can adversely affect turf health and playing conditions just as much, if not more, than the overhead canopy. Tree roots are opportunistic and prefer to inhabit moist, fertile, well-aerated soils characteristically found under most putting greens. One strategy is to encourage

root growth around the sides of the tree that are farthest away from the green by mulching, fertilizing, and providing supplemental irrigation. In regard to root pruning, remember that each severed root has the potential of sprouting 1 to 6 new roots, so it is best to prune as

far away from the green as possible. Root barriers may help reduce re-infestation. From the tree's perspective, root pruning should be limited to outside the drip line, not more than one-third of the entire root system, and at a frequency of every two or more years in autumn.

Q: When we convert out-of-play rough turf to "naturalized" landscape plantings, will all maintenance be eliminated in these areas? (Florida)

A: Once established, naturalized landscape plantings will not require regular inputs such as mowing, irrigation, fertilization, or pesticide treatments. Also, there are other positive benefits such as creating additional wildlife habitat. There's a misperception that naturalized areas don't need maintenance. In Florida, significant annual vegetation



growth occurs and some maintenance of landscape material is still needed. In particular, controlling

noxious exotic weeds has been identified as an issue at numerous Florida courses. Maintenance of naturalized areas is definitely

less time consuming than maintaining turf, but it is not totally eliminated.

