

Turf Twisters

Q: Our ninth green is located very close to our clubhouse. The clubhouse provides significant shade on this green, yet it has good air movement and performs well. Our fourth green is shaded by trees and performs poorly. Our superintendent says that we need to remove trees to promote sunlight penetration on the fourth green, yet our 18th green receives a similar amount of sunlight and performs well. Is our superintendent just making excuses? (Virginia)

A: Probably not. There is a big difference between shade provided by your clubhouse and shade provided by other green plants such as the trees surrounding your fourth green. Green plants can only use certain wavelengths of light to manufacture their food through photosynthesis. A building may cast shade, but the light that is received by the affected turf still has the necessary wavelengths of light for photosynthesis, albeit at lower intensity. Conversely, other green



plants, such as trees, greatly reduce the levels of these plant-active wavelengths of light before they reach the turfgrass. The result is that

the greens (or other turf areas) do not get the light they need to grow vigorously.

Q: Our superintendent wants to implement a fairway topdressing program. We have tried to research this idea and really can't find any negatives regarding potential outcomes. Other than cost, are there issues we have not considered? (Delaware)

A: The strategy is being used by more and more golf course superintendents. First and foremost, if fairway topdressing is considered for implementation, commit to the technique for the long term. This is not something to try and then change after a season or two. Second,

find sand that is coarser than the parent soil of the fairways. Laboratory testing can be conducted to determine if the particle distribution and chemical status are satisfactory. Third, adjust fairway aeration procedures so layering problems do not develop. When a fairway top-

dressing program is in place and core cultivation is conducted, all debris needs to be collected and removed. A more frequently implemented change is to use solid-tine aeration until sufficient sand accumulation has developed, allowing for the return to core cultivation practices.



Q: Is there a simple device on the market for measuring wind speed (air movement) on a putting green? I've been told that although the flag may move, there can be almost no air movement on the surface. I have a hard time selling this to my Green Committee for tree pruning and raising canopies. (Texas)

A: Yes. The Kestrel wind meter is very effective for measuring air movement. It is important to measure the air movement at flag level and then set the meter on the surface to see the difference. It is a great educational tool to use with the Green Committee. Some models also measure humidity.

