

Management Aeration

When a turf grass area is over 50% populated with desirable grasses, a programme of management aeration can be initiated.

Aeration is done on an 'as needed' basis. In order to minimise disturbance of the turf surface (and its use) the first aeration is done at a slow speed. The area is then carefully dragmatted to pulverise all soil cores. On a management basis, aeration is always done prior to fertilisation and liming.

Water infiltration is correlated with the need for aeration and done when needed. No set rules can be applied to a management aeration programme. The turf manager must correlate all indicators of compaction and perform the operation in relation to them.

Aerifying 'by the calendar' is as senseless as irrigating every third Monday. The type of soil, the use of the area, etc., are all determining factors as to when management aeration should be done. Generally speaking, however, the autumn period is a critical time for aeration. This is a period in the life cycle of the grass plant when root growth is at its greatest. Aeration will contribute to good growth at any time during the growth period but aeration of the turf in the early autumn will largely determine the health and vigour of the grass for the following season. Many good turf managers follow the rule, 'What I do for my turf today will determine its condition a year from now'.

Costs for aerification are difficult to determine on a national basis. Consideration must be given to the size of tractor used, prevailing manpower costs and whether the turf grass area is open and clear, such as a fairway, or landscaped with trees, shrubs and walks, such as park areas. Depreciation and repairs must also be taken into consideration. All of these factors can best be determined by the turf manager.

One of the greatest misconceptions relating to the practice of aeration is the fear that disturbing the turf surface will promote weed invasion. This concept is as relevant as keeping soils acid to prevent weeds. The presence and growth of weeds in a turf grass area is the most reliable indication that something is basically wrong with the management programme. Unless the basic problem or problems are determined, weeds will always be present. Basic problems which must be determined and alleviated are: soil compaction, the wrong grass for the climatic area and use, improper irrigation practices, inadequate or imbalance of nutrients, or mismanagement, such as height of cut, air drainage, etc.

Aeration, therefore, is the catalytic agent that allows the turf manager to utilize all the other methods he employs to produce healthy turf. We must conclude, therefore, that the turf manager who is reluctant to aerate because he fears weed invasion, is the man who has not learned to seek out and correct the basic problems.

SELSDON PARK HOTEL

SELSDON PARK HOTEL is the first hotel in Britain to install a pop-up sprinkler system on a golf course.

The Hotel has invested £12,000 to provide complete coverage at the 18 greens, 2 practice putting greens, approach aprons of 6 greens and 2 main hotel lawns.

Commenting on the installation of the American Toro system, Mr Basil Sanderson the hotel owner, said that the greens on the 5,800 m. course would now remain in peak condition in dry spells; and instead of dragging heavy hoses across the course, interrupting play, the important areas would be covered in 10 minute cycles at night.

The accurately controlled water application will not only save labour but also create consistent holding on putting green surfaces and improve the wearing quality of the turf to enable it to support a heavier weight of play.