



## Serendipity With Street Sweeper Helps Cut Grain Off Fairway

**I**sn't it funny how the tricks of the trade are sometimes discovered by accident? This is certainly the case with a technique that we utilize at Olde Florida to help reduce the quantity of grain and puffiness that can occur in our bermudagrass fairways.

While I was employed as an assistant golf course superintendent at the Loxahatchee Club in Jupiter, superintendent (at that time) Phil Shoemaker utilized a Model RHFA "Sweepster" 3-point-mounted sweeper to help clean up debris in fairways after core aeration.

The 6-foot wide, poly/steel brush normally used on roads or parking lots did a great job of breaking up the aeration cores and working the soil into the turfgrass. The organic debris that remained would be wind rowed to the side of the fairway with a blower and picked up later by a Toro Rake-o-Vac.

During the process of cleaning up the turfgrass we discovered that the broom would stand the turf up significantly when the broom rotated against the grain. After mowing the fairway, we then discovered that grain in these areas of the fairway was significantly reduced.

Upon accepting my current position, I also purchased a Sweepster broom for the same purpose of cleaning up after cultural

practices. However, we have taken this process a step further and incorporated the tool in to our grain-control program. In fact, the Sweepster broom does such a good job, the turfgrass in the fairways does not require any additional maintenance practices to reduce the grain. Consequently, with enough core aeration to reduce thatch, aggressive vertical mowing has all but been eliminated on our fairways.



*Making one-way passes down a fairway against the grain, a tractor-mounted, street-sweeper broom, above, stands the turf up and then double-cutting the fairways, below, mows off the grain, producing good lies on upright grass*



To perform the cultural practice of sweeping the fairways, the unit is installed on the back of our John Deere 5200 tractor. When the operator initially reaches the fairway they will scrape their hand or foot across the fairway to determine the domi-

nant direction of the grain. The broom is then engaged and travels against the grain, standing up the grain and/or stolons.

Since the grain on a fairway primarily grows the same direction, the tractor is backed up to the originating side of the fairway, staying off the turf that has already been broomed, and makes the next pass immediately adjacent to the previous pass. The operator continues this process of sweeping the turf in one direction until the entire fairway is complete.

After the tractor operator has a few rows completed another operator cuts the "standing up" turfgrass with a fairway mower in the same direction the broom traveled, thus "cutting off the grain." After completing each pass, the operator mows the same area a second time in the opposite direction.

When complete, every inch of the fairway has been mowed twice, the first time against the grain and the second with the grain, primarily to give the turfgrass a cleaner appearance.

We have found this process to be a win/win situation. The golfers enjoy the better lie their ball receives as the turfgrass has a more upright growth pattern and the turfgrass is easier to mow and we endure less scalping from puffy turfgrass.

Since the process is less disruptive to the turfgrass we have found the practice can be done numerous times of the year even in higher play months of spring and fall.