

*Preventable causes of turf decline, such as trees blocking sunlight, should be addressed to avoid reoccurring problems.*

## REDUCING THE RISK OF PUTTING GREEN TURF LOSS

BY ADDISON BARDEN | AGRONOMIST, SOUTHEAST REGION

Putting green turf loss is as inevitable as catching the flu, though hopefully it happens less frequently. In the same way that we take preventive steps to protect ourselves – and others – from illness, superintendents use practices like aeration and applications of plant protectants to keep putting greens as healthy as possible.

Two of the main contributors to preventable putting green damage are lack of sunlight and poor drainage. When putting green injury reoccurs in the same area, it's a strong indicator that one, or even both of these culprits is involved.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when putting greens have issues with shade and poor drainage. Tree removal to maximize sunlight reaching the putting greens is controversial at many golf facilities, but adequate sunlight is imperative for maintaining healthy turf and quality playing conditions. Good drainage is just as important. Raised areas around the putting green collar and flat or bowled areas

within a green can prevent the movement of water, which can cause turf damage in several ways. Repairing these areas so water drains off the putting surface will promote better playing conditions in the long term.

As inevitable as catching the flu, putting green turf loss will happen. When golf facilities act proactively to remove problematic trees and address drainage issues they are reducing the risk of problems down the road. There may be some controversy associated with the steps taken to prevent putting green damage, but the consequences of inaction could be much worse.