



*Making light and frequent sand topdressing applications to putting greens helps smooth surface imperfections and improves putting conditions.*

## A LITTLE SAND GOES A LONG WAY

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Applying relatively small amounts of sand to putting greens on a frequent basis is one of the most important practices superintendents use to create smooth, firm putting surfaces. The disruption to playing conditions after these topdressing applications is relatively minor, but sometimes sand on the putting surface can be frustrating. Making fewer applications with more sand might seem like an appealing alternative, but this approach could actually decrease putting green health and consistency. Let's take a closer look at the reasoning behind applying light rates of sand every 1-2 weeks and the many benefits this approach has to offer.

### **No sand means soft, spongy putting greens.**

In the absence of a routine sand topdressing program, putting greens can form a thick organic matter layer – i.e., decaying roots, grass leaves and stems. Excessive organic matter can act like a sponge, holding water near the putting surface, which contributes to soft, spongy playing conditions. Courses with elevated organic matter levels also struggle to maintain consistent green speeds and the ball marks are often deep and take forever to recover. There is also a greater risk of disease, mower scalping and other serious problems that may have lasting impacts on playing conditions.

## Light and frequent sand applications to the rescue!

Light applications of sand applied routinely is a proven strategy to avoid excessive organic matter accumulation and helps to maintain smooth, firm putting surfaces.

Even though topdressing may cause some temporary disruption, putting on greens the day of sand topdressing can still be an enjoyable experience. In fact, a quality sand applied at light rates will smooth greens and produce a better playing surface after topdressing. Here is what you can expect from a light and frequent sand topdressing program:

- **Less mower scalping** – Mower scalping results in brown, thin turf. Sand topdressing dilutes thatch, protects the plants and prevents greens from becoming soft and prone to mower scalping.
- **Smoother greens** – Light, frequent sand topdressing with a quality sand smooths small imperfections in the greens, improving ball roll.
- **Drier surfaces** – Sand holds less water than organic matter. Therefore, more sand at the surface results in drier and firmer conditions, which reduces the severity of ball marks.
- **Long-lasting greens** – Greens with excess organic matter will fail at a much faster rate than those that are routinely topdressed.
- **More consistent green speeds** – Frequent topdressing with a quality material reduces surface imperfections and firms the surfaces – which yield more consistent green speeds.

You may see some sand on your ball – Sand topdressing does cause some temporary playability issues when morning dew is present. Golfers playing early in the morning may see sand clinging to the golf ball as it rolls across a freshly topdressed green. It's worth being patient with this minor inconvenience because the benefits of topdressing are so significant.

## When golfers embrace sand topdressing, they win!

Golfers who play at courses with routine sand topdressing programs will enjoy better greens. Not only will playing conditions be better on a daily basis, the greens will last longer and be at less risk for serious turf problems. This translates to less disruption to golfers in the long term as well.