



## Keeping It Clean

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

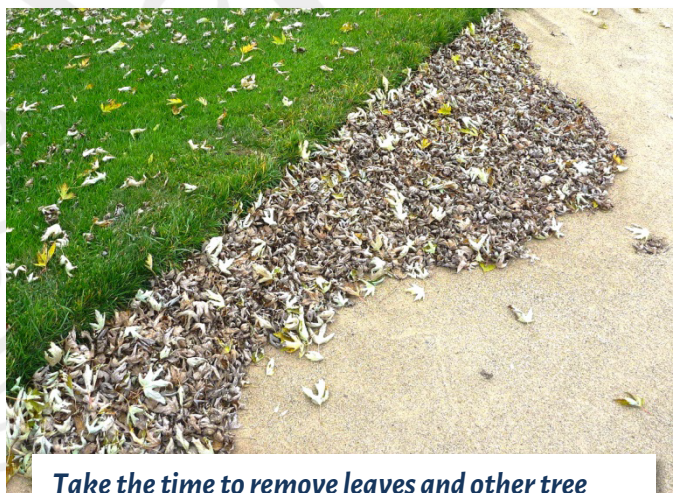
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White, manufactured sand is a popular choice for bunkers at many golf facilities because it provides a firm, consistent playing surface when it is properly maintained. In an effort to keep the sand clean for as long as possible, courses that choose to use white sand usually install a liner in the base of the bunker to create a barrier between the native soil and the sand.

There are a slew of options to consider for lining bunkers. All of the options do an effective job of separating sand from the underlying soil and several of the more sophisticated products can nearly double the cost of bunker construction. However, it doesn't make much sense to purchase premium sand and install an expensive liner but ignore other, less-obvious sources of sand contamination.

Tree debris is a potential source of bunker sand contamination that becomes more of a concern this time of the year. Seeds, buds, acorns, samaras, twigs and other debris find their way into bunkers all season, but the standard program for bunker preparation at most golf facilities includes some process of removing debris interferes with day-to-day play.

Fall is the time when leaves drop, increasing the potential for sand contamination simply due to the large quantity of tree debris constantly being blown across the course. Play also decreases and short-staffed maintenance



*Take the time to remove leaves and other tree debris from bunkers before winter. Decomposing leaves under snow cover can contaminate clean bunker sand.*

crews are spread thin preparing the course for winter. It becomes easy to place bunker maintenance on the back burner for only a few rounds of golf per day, especially when you begin chasing your tail trying to keep all of the turf playing surfaces free from leaves on a windy day.

Make the extra effort to clean out bunkers one last time before the first significant snowfall. By the first significant snowfall nearly all of the leaves should be off the trees and either mulched or blown into wooded sites. A dense mat of wet, decaying leaves under snow cover has all winter and early spring to contaminate clean sand.

No doubt, many courses throughout the Central Region have been heavily overplanted with trees over the years, but it only take one big, messy tree planted too close to a green or bunker to cause serious debris problems all year. Refer to the recent issue of the [Green Section Record](#) for useful and interesting perspectives regarding the controversial and emotional topic of trees on the golf course.

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