



The Turf Trifecta

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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It was only a matter of time before heat and high humidity made life miserable for cool-season putting greens. The first truly stressful weather in the northern part of the Central Region arrived to the sound of Fourth of July fireworks. Unfortunately, there is no relief predicted in the near future.



Venting putting greens is an excellent way to mitigate the stress of extreme heat and high humidity.

It is risky to perform important putting green maintenance practices during stretches of hot, humid weather. Practice such as topdressing, rolling and aeration all have the potential to injure stressed turf. In some instances, doing nothing is the most prudent option. In other cases, combining several maintenance practices into a single, efficient operation can minimize turf stress.

An option worth considering is to immediately follow light topdressing with venting using an aerator equipped with small-diameter solid tines and finally rolling to restore putting green smoothness. If the topdressing sand is dry, it will be easily incorporated into the turf canopy by the aerator and roller. Otherwise, use a lightweight cocoa mat to gently work the sand into the canopy without causing turf injury. There are a variety of benefits to this combination of maintenance practices including:

- Sand topdressing can reduce the severity of [anthracnose](#).
- Sand topdressing will cover algae and moss, depriving them of the sunlight they require to grow.

- Venting helps maintain a healthy balance of air and moisture in the upper soil profile. You won't grow new roots during hot weather, but perhaps you can delay root decline.
- Venting facilitates water infiltration and helps prevent wet wilt—a condition that can occur when hot, sunny conditions follow a heavy rain event.
- Venting improves the efficiency and effectiveness of spot watering by promoting rapid water movement into the soil. Venting also helps prevent the development of localized dry spots.
- Rolling smooths turf and minimizes surface disruption caused by venting; it also helps incorporate sand into the turf canopy.

There is plenty to do during the peak golfing months but rarely enough time to get it all done. It is especially challenging when putting surfaces need to be groomed for special events during hot, stressful weather. Combining several management practices into a single operation can help maximize efficiency and minimize turf stress.

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