



## Balancing Priorities

By John Daniels, agronomist, Central Region

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Mild temperatures in the South and spectacular fall tree foliage in the North make fall an ideal time to enjoy a round of golf. Much to the dismay of many golfers, late summer to early fall is also the optimal time to undertake important cultural programs that may cause temporary disruption to putting surfaces. Whether it is the numerous events that fill the golfing calendar or the countless tee times, finding time to complete necessary maintenance practices continues to be a challenge for many golf course superintendents.

When properly timed, recovery from aeration can occur in as little as seven to 10 days. On the other hand, aerating during periods of unfavorable weather can result in turf damage that often persists for a month or more, especially in the North when frost or cool soil temperatures inhibit turf growth. Unfortunately, the latter was a common trend for a number of golf courses in 2016.



*Untimely cultural practices can result in damage that takes an extended period of time to heal.*

Golf course superintendents are forced into a tight spot: aerate early and risk damaging turfgrass plants weakened by summer stress or aerate late and risk having cold temperatures delay plants from fully recovering. Further complicating matters are weather conditions that can vary dramatically from year to year. Additionally, superintendents must anticipate pesky rainstorms that may happen to roll through and prevent work from being done during aeration dates that were scheduled months in advance.

Every effort should be made to avoid the no-win scenario of having to aerate during unfavorable weather conditions because only one day was set aside on the golf schedule for fall cultivation. Make an extra effort to schedule a backup date for fall aeration operations. The political and financial implications of having weak, bumpy putting surfaces all fall far outweigh the inconvenience of possibly losing one additional day of golf. For a golf course to be truly successful, the agronomic and golfing calendars must be balanced.

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