



## August Is Time For Vacation... And Putting Green Aeration

By David Oatis, regional director, Northeast Region | August 18, 2017



*Shade and frequent rainfall have made some bentgrass putting greens vulnerable to damage from maintenance traffic and aggressive golf shoes.*

**M**any golf courses in the Northeast Region have experienced overabundant rainfall for most of the 2017 golf season. There have been problems, but turf throughout much of the region has performed reasonably well this year despite the above-average rainfall. Now is not the time to lose focus because, while putting green aeration in August provides many benefits, it also entails some risk and turf can still be lost.

This year has not been a great year for creeping bentgrass. With a cool spring and overabundant rainfall, bentgrass has not received enough sunlight to achieve its typical seasonal growth. Furthermore, wet conditions have left newly established bentgrass greens, tees and fairways especially prone to wear injury.

Mechanical damage also has been common, especially where rainfall has been heaviest. Continual mowing and rolling under wet conditions has been a contributing factor in some cases. Aggressive golf shoes can also cause damage. Some golf courses mow putting greens seven or more times per week, roll regularly, topdress weekly or biweekly and frequently spray plant protectants. That is a lot of traffic for turf that is cut to a height of one-eighth of an inch or lower, so maintenance traffic can be a big contributor to wear.

The incidence of anthracnose and summer patch has increased in recent weeks. Outbreaks have popped up after stretches of heat and humidity, but some look to be the result of low nitrogen fertility or over regulation.

As the Aerators Warm Up:

1. Make sure your turf is healthy enough for aeration. Scaling back an aeration treatment by using smaller or solid tines, applying less topdressing sand or brushing less aggressively can help avoid damage that could take weeks to recover.
2. Always have a backup aeration date in case the weather doesn't cooperate. Rain or hot, dry weather can reduce the benefits of aeration and increase the risk of turfgrass injury.
3. Aeration can encourage outbreaks of summer patch and anthracnose. These diseases may progress unnoticed on greens that have been aerated and topdressed, so be sure fungicide application intervals are on target. If either disease gets a three- to five-day head start on control efforts, the damage can be significant.
4. Fertilize before and after aeration to encourage rapid healing.
5. Using kiln-dried sand makes it much easier to fill aeration holes, but it can be hot. Allow time for kiln-dried sand to cool before applying it to putting greens.
6. Precisely apply topdressing sand to avoid building new collar dams or adding to existing ones.

Many putting greens are suffering from compaction and wear injury, issues that have been exacerbated by the overabundant rainfall. Consequently, many greens will benefit tremendously from aeration this August. However, severely weakened greens must be treated differently. Don't be afraid to scale back a cultivation treatment if you're not certain that your turfgrass is strong enough to handle it. Getting turf healthy now and being more aggressive with cultivation later is sometimes the best approach.

### **Northeast Region Agronomists:**

David A. Oatis, regional director - [doatis@usga.org](mailto:doatis@usga.org)

Adam Moeller, director, Green Section Education - [amoeller@usga.org](mailto:amoeller@usga.org)

James E. Skorulski, agronomist - [jskorulski@usga.org](mailto:jskorulski@usga.org)

Elliott Dowling, agronomist - [edowling@usga.org](mailto:edowling@usga.org)

Addison Barden, agronomist - [abarden@usga.org](mailto:abarden@usga.org)

Paul Jacobs, agronomist - [pjacobs@usga.org](mailto:pjacobs@usga.org)

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)