



Recovery efforts at Cochecho Country Club in Dover, N.H., pay off even with less than favorable growing conditions this spring.

SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS

BY JIM SKORULSKI | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

Golf courses in parts of New England, Ontario, Quebec, eastern Canada and even a few much farther south have been struggling to recover from winter injury on putting greens, tees and fairways. Reestablishing turf on severely injured greens in spring is never easy. It is a long process that can wear down turf managers, staff members and golfers. It is an especially difficult time for facilities that desperately need revenue from spring play.

The recovery process is driven by temperature more than any other factor. The cold conditions we have experienced this spring have not been conducive for seed germination and plant recovery. Covers and darkening agents have been used to warm the soil, but superintendents have anxiously awaited the warmer temperatures needed to drive more widespread growth and recovery. Progress, though slow, has become evident recently and damaged areas are shrinking.

The next phase of recovery for many will involve additional seeding, sod plugging and patching putting green areas that remain thin. Less-invasive drill seeders, or hand spiking and seeding, are preferred for any

additional seeding to minimize injury to new plants in recovering areas. Decisions to sod or plug damaged areas often depend on what sod is available. Nursery sod is always best for patching, but sod may be harvested from the perimeter of greens or practice greens to complete necessary repairs.

Additional seeding work will likely be required in recovering fairway areas as well. Do you have the equipment and time that are necessary to do that work well, or is it best left to a contractor that has the proper equipment to do the job right? Pressure may be felt to sod slowly recovering fairway areas. It is probably best to avoid that temptation unless quality nursery sod is available and you are comfortable with establishing large areas of sod in summer.

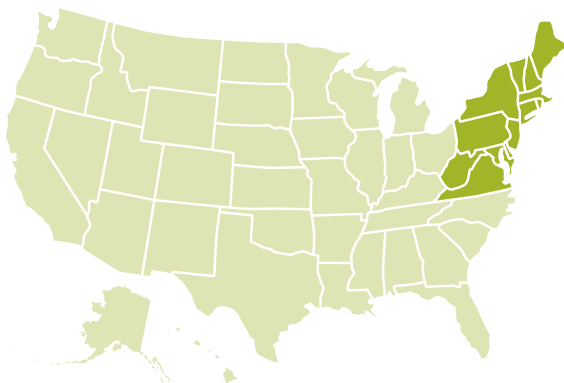
Traffic management is also an important consideration as greens and other playing areas are opened for play. Surfaces that have reestablished turf cover are sometimes mistakenly assumed to be fully recovered – they are not! Play and cart traffic will still need to be managed away from recovering areas as much as possible. That may involve continued use of temporary greens, utilizing perimeter hole locations, rerouting traffic away from normal entry and exit points, and restricting carts to paths where necessary. Work with golfers to gain their cooperation and make them aware that their actions will impact the speed of recovery and surface conditions in the summer ahead.

Finally, I want to send my heartfelt thanks to you all as I complete my final Regional Update and prepare to retire from the best job I will ever have. I feel very fortunate to have interacted with – and learned from – so many good people through my travels across the Northeast. The memories are everlasting. Best wishes to all this season and in the seasons to come.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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