

*Decline like this occurred on tees throughout the Northeast. The primary reason was excessive organic matter holding moisture during extreme heat.*

## DON'T SLEEP ON TEES

BY ELLIOTT DOWLING | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

Most tees should be cultivated at a similar intensity as putting greens. Firmness is an especially important quality for teeing surfaces because firm surfaces help golfers maintain their footing and stability while swinging. Firm tee surfaces without excessive organic matter are also healthier and better able to withstand foot traffic than soft and wet surfaces. Additionally, healthy soils with an appropriate amount of organic matter yield healthier turf that can recover faster from wear. With the amount of concentrated traffic and divots that some tees receive, recovery will be closely linked to their condition throughout the year.

Understanding the importance of organic matter management and plant health might lead you to wonder why tees are not cultivated more often. There isn't one answer to this question because tee management is very course dependent, but if this summer has taught superintendents in the Northeast one thing it is that you can't sleep on tees. Most of the Northeast experienced



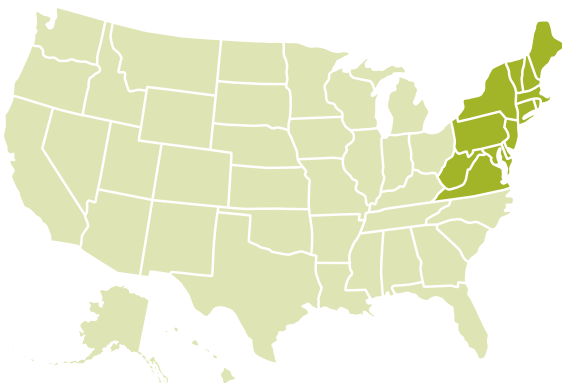
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a very hot, humid and sometimes wet July. Consequently, there was a lot of turf decline on tees that was related to saturated soils and excessive thatch.

To improve future performance without going down the path of rebuilding tees with drainage and a better growing medium, the first place to start is usually cultivation. Frequent aeration and topdressing will remove and dilute thatch. Aeration is especially important if your surfaces have an excessive amount of thatch. Impacting playability with aeration should be less of a concern on teeing surfaces because all players have a perfect lie when they place the ball on a tee.

The weather pattern experienced this summer will occur again in the Northeast. If your tees declined this year, don't let it happen again because of organic matter holding water at the surface. Increase cultivation so that thatch is lowered to a healthier level that will support more reliable turf in the seasons to come.



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