

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words

By Dave Oatis, regional director, Northeast Region

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Turf educators have extensively used the power of pictures for years, because a good image can tell a great story. Often, a good image can more powerfully, more convincingly and more quickly convey ideas and concepts than a lengthy description. The above image may not look all that impressive, but combine it with a brief description to set up the story and it becomes very powerful.



Root growth tells a great story. The healthy roots in the profile on the right are thanks to ample sun. The profile on the left has weak roots because of heavy shade.

This is an image of two soil profiles, taken about 40 feet apart, from a green that experienced extensive winter injury in 2014. The green was sodded with washed bentgrass sod two months before the picture was taken.

The profile on the left has visibly weaker rooting. Close inspection shows that the roots are thinner in diameter, much less dense and much shallower as compared to the profile on the right. What is the difference, you ask? You guessed it; the profile with better rooting was taken from an area of the green that receives full sun. The weaker-rooted profile is from a shaded area of the same green that only receives approximately 50 percent of available sunlight. The green had not yet been opened for play, but you can imagine how the turf performed once it began to receive normal traffic. The canopies don't look all that different, but the portion of the green with a weak root system didn't handle traffic well.

Most courses have at least one or two greens that are located in shaded environments. Pulling soil profiles and comparing root growth from shaded greens to root growth from greens located in the open can tell quite a tale. Hopefully this technique will help you more effectively communicate with your golfers.

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