



Installing Supplemental Drainage To Improve Playing Conditions

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The summertime rains have begun in the Southeast Region. Generally, rainfall is considered beneficial on golf courses because it supplies water to the turf and helps flush salts through the soil. However, excessive rainfall and heavy downpours can cause problems.

Saturated conditions cause playability and turf-quality issues such as plugged lies, mud on the ball, and ruts from golf carts and mowers. Furthermore, areas that remain waterlogged for extended periods can experience turf decline due to lack of oxygen.



French drains can alleviate soil saturation and improve turf quality in wet areas.

Even golf courses that drain relatively well have some areas that are wetter than others. Soil type, organic matter accumulation, obstructed surface drainage and low elevation are all factors that can cause wet areas. Consistently wet areas may require supplemental drainage to alleviate soil saturation and improve golf course quality. Oftentimes, drainage improvements on different areas of the golf course take place each summer.

The most common supplemental drainage used on golf courses is the French drain. French drains consist of a series of trenches containing perforated drain pipes encased in gravel. The pipes typically drain to an adjacent pond or catch basin. Even with French drains, some low-lying areas may not adequately drain, so it may be necessary to fill the area to eliminate drainage issues.

Small amounts of supplemental drainage can oftentimes be installed by the golf course maintenance staff. However, the staff may fall behind on maintenance practices if these projects are too large. As such, an increasing number of facilities are hiring independent contractors that specialize in golf course drainage. Facilities that require extensive drainage improvements should consider creating a long-range, drainage-improvement plan as described in [Planning a Golf Course Drainage Project](#).

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