



The Benefits Of Sand Topdressing

By Todd Lowe, agronomist, Southeast Region

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There are a variety of maintenance practices used to provide desirable playing conditions on golf course putting greens, with sand topdressing being one of the more common practices. Sand topdressing also is one of the more misunderstood practices among golfers, who feel that sanded greens play poorly. Understanding the benefits of sand topdressing may help reduce golfer frustration when they see the “silver sheen” on greens during their next round of golf. The benefits of topdressing include:



The silvery sheen on putting greens is evidence that light sand topdressing is taking place...and that's a good thing.

- **Improved Smoothness**
– Voids exist within the turf canopy between turfgrass leaves and stems, causing inconsistent ball roll. Sand topdressing helps fill these voids to provide smoother and truer putts.
- **Thatch Dilution** – The layer of organic debris, stems, crowns and roots in the upper rootzone – i.e., thatch – can become concentrated and encourage mower scalping and localized dry spots. Thatch should be diluted with sand through practices like verticutting and sand topdressing to maintain good turf quality.
- **Improved Turf Recovery** – Occasional turf thinning can occur on putting greens. Sand helps cushion leaf tips and crowns and reduces algae.

- **Increased Firmness** – Turf produces organic matter in the upper rootzone that creates soft, spongy playing conditions. Regular sand topdressing, along with core aeration, improves surface firmness and resiliency.
- **Improved Rootzone** – Sand drains well and resists soil compaction. The accumulation of sand from multiple topdressings over many years can improve soil physical properties.

The amount of sand applied depends on the time of year and growth rate of the turfgrass. At courses with bermudagrass putting greens, more sand is applied during summer when the turf is actively growing; however, lighter rates of sand also may be applied during cooler months. Putting greens in the Deep South are topdressed with sand all year but generally are only “dusted” with lighter sand rates when turf growth slows as soil temperatures decrease.

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