



Hazards are tough enough to hit over, so why narrow the other side?

PINCH POINTS

BY LARRY GILHULY | AGRONOMIST, WEST REGION

We have all found ourselves standing 30 yards short of a green with a front hole location. While accomplished golfers can simply hit a nice one-bounce spinner or a flop shot that ends up near the hole, this situation can be particularly challenging for average golfers. Most golfers rely on the trusty bump-and-run shot to get their ball on the green in these tricky situations. But, if the approach is too soft or gets so narrow in front of the green that a bump-and-run shot would have to be played through the rough, the average golfer's options are limited.

The maintenance of approaches is not a new topic. Basic recommendations can be found in the article, *Approaches: A Key Part of the Golf Course*. A small but extremely important part of this article discusses how approach contours can change over time resulting in difficult playing conditions for high-handicap golfers. It is often difficult for most golfers with high handicaps to hit shots

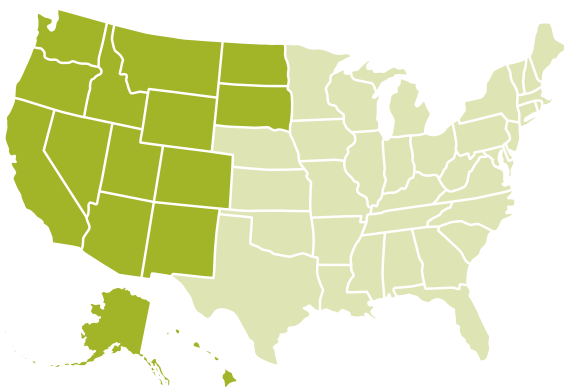


For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

[Learn More](#)

with a lot of spin or high flop shots off low-cut turf. With a low-trajectory shot as their only option, high-handicap golfers are overly penalized by soft, narrow approaches that are surrounded by thick rough. This can reduce the amount of fun high-handicap golfers have and slow pace of play.

As we enter another golf season, now is a good time to make sure approaches are as firm as the putting surfaces. Standard programs such as deep vertical mowing, aeration and sand topdressing all help. Now is also the perfect time to consider widening some narrow approaches. After all, don't we have enough pinch points when we are out driving in traffic?



WEST REGION AGRONOMISTS:

Patrick Gross, Regional Director, pgross@usga.org

Larry Gilhuly, Agronomist, lgilhuly@usga.org

Brian Whitlark, Agronomist, bwhitlark@usga.org

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)
