Cores? Let 'em lay, is what the folks at DeSantis Landscapes, Salem, OR, tell their customers.

"We used to rake up plugs," says John O'Neil, maintenance supervisor. "Now we tell the customer that it's better to let them lay for a week and dry up. Then we run over them with a mulching mower."

Either spring or fall is a good time to aerate lawns, O'Neil says. He leans toward spring despite the fact that it's a busier time of year.

DeSantis's customers have a wide mix of soils from heavy clays to really loose ground. "We'll do the heavier clay more often," O'Neil says.

Coring is generally done two-and-a-half to three inches deep on two- to three-inch spacing. Because DeSantis's aeration jobs often come at the busiest season, the company will sometimes subcontract a job. Even when handling the jobs in-house, they typically rent their aerators. "We only use them seasonally, so it pays to rent," O'Neil explains.

When specifying equipment, they prefer to use a cam-operated machine as opposed to the roller type. "They seem to do a cleaner job since they pull the cores straight out," O'Neil says. He finds that the roller units often come back at an angle and tear the turf.

As long as landscape professionals explain the benefits of leaving the cores on the ground, homeowners seem to have no objection. The next mowing, done with a mulcher, recycles the cores and any organic matter to the lawn. That makes all parties — the customer, worker and lawn — happy.

**Cutting corners**

Tom Taylor, owner of Integrity Landscape and Design, Nashville, TN, hates to see his workers coming back at the end of the day exhausted from wrestling with aerators.

There's no good way to cut corners with an aerator — but Taylor thinks there should be.

"I'm looking for something that doesn't jerk the operator around the corners so much, something with good controls up front," says Taylor. His crews frequently deal with heavier soils. "More than anything else, I look for ease of operator use."
Before you buy...

- Check a machine's productivity in square feet per hour. Remember, productivity varies depending on the gear used.
- Know the machine's coring pattern

Ask:
- How many different tine sizes and styles can be used
- How deep will the machine dig?
- How clean does the core come out of the ground?
- What does the machine weigh?
- Do you want a machine that slits or cores?
- How convenient are the hand controls?
- Can you get it on/off a truck easily?
- Is the engine one you're used to working with and stock parts and supplies for?

Cornering is the first area where Taylor would make some design changes. He'd like a machine that makes tight turns at the end of a row like a zero-turn mower or a walk-behind, not the big sweeping turns required to keep things going on many machines.

"There should be a way to clutch the machine when coming around a turn, rather than having to make a direct stop or letting the machine pull you around the corner," he says.

That would allow his workers to cover the maximum amount of ground per day without getting beat up. "I know you have to make trade-offs," Taylor says, noting that acres per day is still important. But he thinks a unit with a third wheel — a pivot wheel — would allow tight turns without uplifting the whole machine.

Speaking of lifting, Taylor would also like to find a machine that's easier to lift off a pickup truck. "When all the dove-tails are being used for other jobs, we'll run the cores out on a pickup," he notes. "I'd want to tweak the machine for ease of getting it off and on trucks."

AER WAY
800/457-8310
NORWICH, ONTARIO, CANADA
www.aerway.com
- Advanced Aeration Systems come in 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7.5-ft. models
- Fit Cat 1, Cat 2 or 3-point hitch
- Require 15-40 hp tractor
- Bolt-on replaceable tines, built-in frame stands, ballast tray
Circle #291

AGRIMETAL
819/398-6883
WICKHAM, QUEBEC
www.agrimetal.com
- Aerators come in 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-in. working widths
- Equip with heavy wall 0.75-in. coring tines or slicing knives
- Eight tines standard per wheel, option to double to 16
Circle #292

BANNERMAN
800/665-2696
ONTARIO, CANADA
www.sportsturfmagic.com
- The Bannerman BA4 Air-Ject aerator spiker is 4-in-1 unit
- Cores, slits, fractures or spikes
- Moves at five mph
- Has 13 tines, each with 15 spikes or points
Circle #293

BISHOP ENTERPRISES
800/854-4851
BELT BUCKLE, TN
www.turf-aire.com
- Heavy-duty 3-pt. hitch aerator cores to 4.5 in.
- 48 tines on the 36-in. unit, 64 on the 48-in., 80 on the 60-in.
- 6x6 single tine pattern, 3x4.5 double-tined three models available
Circle #294

DAIRON S.A.
800/521-5350
LEMANS, FRANCE
www.mge-dairon.com
- Rotadairon loosens, renovates soil
- Cultivates to 8.5 in.
- Buries stones, clods, debris
- Rolls with 800 to 2000 lbs. pressure
Circle #295

FIRST PRODUCTS
800/363-8780
TIFTON, GA
www.1stproducts.com
- Seeda-vator from First Products, Tifton, GA has aeration density of eight holes per sq. ft.
- Weighs 1,100 lbs.
- 144 9/16 x 3.75-in. hardened tines require 30-hp 3-pt. hitch tractor
Circle #296

GANDY
800/443-2476
OWATONNA, MN
www.gandy.net
- Electric actuated spiker/spreader overseeds and aerates in one pass
- 42" seed hopper with spread plate
- Rolling drum has 1220 replaceable steel spikes
Circle #297
HINES
252/937-4555
ROCKY MOUNT, NC
www.hinesmfg.com
- Hines 60 drill aerator drills 1-15 in. deep
- 9 psi footprint is gentle on soft turf
- Comes standard with 0.625- and 0.75-in. bit sizes
- Does 6,000 sq. ft. per hour at 10 in. depth
Circle #298

JOHN DEERE
800/537-8233
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC
www.deere.com
- Both the 1500 and 1000 aerators are tractor mounted
- Pull 30 cores per square foot
- Larger 2000 has 80-in. coring swath
Circle #299

LAND PRIDE
785/820-8692
SALINA, KS
www.landpride.com
- CA25 Series is available in 48-, 60-, 72-in. widths
- Eight gangs, 64 spoons on smaller units
- 12 gangs, 96 spoons on larger ones
Circle #300

SELBRO, INC.
800/973-5246
BELLEVUE, OH
- Turns aeration cores into topdressing with one pass
Circle #304

SISIS
864/261-6218
SANDY SPRINGS, SC
www.sisis.com
- MaxSlit aerator
- 77-in.-wide with working width of 63 in.
- Wide rim plates reduce surface marking
Circle #305

SOUTHERN GREEN
800/888-9883
ZACHARY, LA
www.soilreliever.com
- SR75HD Soil Reliever
- Built for large areas and tough conditions
- SR54 is lightest unit, for greens, tees
- Does great on ultra-dwarf bermudas and newer bents
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TERRACARE PRODUCTS
608/429-3402
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www.terracare.com
- T-144 Terrator from Terracare, Pardeeville, WI has 144 free-swinging tines
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- 5-ft. aerating width
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