

THE KEYNOTER

A Publication of
The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, Inc.

— AERATION — FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Benefits: Penetrates and removes material from thatch and compacted layers, thus encouraging

- increased water intake, less runoff
- deeper water penetration
- deeper placement of lime and fertilizer
- increased microbial activity due to improved soil aeration
- deeper rooting and more vigorous turf
- greater resiliency

Timing: Aerate when desirable grasses are actively growing. Fall and spring are preferred times for cool-season turfgrasses.

Because aeration brings buried seed to the surface and also breaks herbicide barriers at the soil surface, spring aeration should precede application of preemergence chemicals for crabgrass control and fall aeration should precede application of pre-emergence chemicals for *Poa annua* control, which may push the operation into early August.

Ease of penetration and core removal is favored by moist soil conditions, however compaction and structure deterioration may occur if soils are in a saturated or near saturated condition. Dead grass around the aeration holes isn't always due to drying of the soil. Grass around the edge of holes made in the summer tends to be a favorite of cutworms, who hide in the holes during the day and eat at night.

Core removal: Removal is not practicable on large turf areas. When aeration is being used as a curative measure on greens, remove the cores. They represent the soil that has been creating your problems. If not removed they should be supplemented with a well-modified topdressing mix—or perhaps with only a coarse amendment (sand or calcined clay) when the green is topdressed following aeration. Cores from greens with adequate soil physical properties can be broken up with a vertical mover and matted in alone or with additional topdressing.

When overseeding: Repeated passes over an area are required to bring enough soil to the surface for a good seedbed. Need for more passes increases as the spacing between tines increases.

D. V. Waddington

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