

I'm stunned at the number of golfers who believe aerification is something designed to destroy their 22 handicaps. They just don't understand how important aerification is to golf course maintenance. Then again, many superintendents aren't helping them understand.

"Aerification" is not a dirty word, but we turfgrass types have helped make it one because we don't speak up enough about its agronomic importance.

In many cases, superintendents have an overwhelming urge to tell golfers the work they're doing — even if golfers don't need to know. But the failure to explain exactly what aerification *does* undermines golfers' understanding of its magnitude. That's why aerification is at the top of the list of things golfers wish wouldn't be done to their playing surfaces.

Our cause is not helped when Joe Golfer or Mr. Member calls the pro shop for a tee time and is told: "The superintendent just punched greens, so the course isn't in great condition. But come out and play if you must." No matter how politely the point is made, the golfer is left with the thought that aerification to any golf course surface at any time is bad.

As is often superintendents' luck, tines often enter turf when it looks healthy to the golfer. But for agronomic reasons, good-looking turf will have tines pressed in it to keep it looking that way, and it will take a few days to heal.

But none of that matters to golfers, who march into pro shops or whatever offices they can find and complain. In a show of jelly-spined unity, green committees and general managers, who are tired of dealing with golfers' complaints, order aerification stopped. It's a vicious cycle.

Golfers must understand that something *is* being done for the future health of their golf courses. In order for them to understand, superintendents must adequately explain it.

Enlightenment can come from the truth. Here's what we need to be saying: "Aerification is done to *your* golf facility on *your* be-

Aerification Is Not A Dirty Word

BY DAVE WILBER



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half by *your* well-trained and well-intentioned superintendent. Aerification allows *you* to keep playing golf. I'm extremely happy to tell you that because of this sometimes-complicated procedure, we're improving *your* course for *you* — now and in the future."

Talented turfgrass professionals take whatever resources they can to create the best golf course conditions possible. This is why I lose my cool when I see superintendents and their staffs thrown under the bus every time they make the effort to work their soils. Golfers dare to call their work "big problems" and complain at how "messed up" the courses have become.

Compaction relief, thatch control, increasing water infiltration — these and many others are great reasons to aerify.

My words here are more than merely an agronomic rant. They're more basic than that. This is my idealistic plea to everyone connected with golf to erase the idea that aerification is bad.

You must explain to golfers that aerifying is the right thing to do — even if it costs them a few missed putts.

You know your golf courses better than anyone. This means doing a few things that hurt for a day or two and pay dividends for months.

You must make better efforts to make everyone understand the importance of aerification. Finding ways to do things better, faster and cheaper is your ongoing duty.

Aerification is not a dirty word. Superintendents who know this and can talk about it make golf a better sport.

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