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 better quality greens that are easier
 and less costly to manage.

8. I've religiously aerified my greens twice a year for the past 20 years. Each time I've removed the cores and backfilled the holes with my own rootzone mix. It's gotten to the point now where the cores are of the same texture as the topdressing I'm hauling back on. Can I stop aerifying now or is there still value to the procedure? Would one time a year be enough? (I'm under a lot of pressure from our members to give it up altogether.)

KENOSHA COUNTY

ANSWER: The answers to your questions lie in the reasons for core aerification and whether or not one or more of these reasons still applies to your greens. Core aerification alleviates soil compaction, minimizes soil layering, crusting and localized dry spots and retards thatch accumulation. You indicate that there is no longer any evidence of soil layering, so we can strike this from

the list. If you rely on wetting agents to handle localized dry spots, the list becomes even shorter. I'm of the opinion that core aerification can be replaced by slicing plus topdressing to control thatch. Assuming you're willing to go this less disruptive route for thatch control, then all that remains to worry about is soil compaction.

It would be foolhardy for me to sit here and decide whether or not compaction is or could become a problem for you should you cease core aerification. All I can do is try to provide information that will help you make this decision.

Research has shown that soil compactability is minimal and essentially constant once the sand content of soil exceeds 60%. Thus, with greens that contain more than 60 percent sand, traffic rather than soil composition controls how much compaction will occur. The minimum traffic is, of course, that arising from maintenance equipment. To this you have to add the number of rounds of golf being played each year. The

heavier the play, the greater the potential for compaction and its associated problems.

I find it difficult to believe that there are any golf greens whose bulk densities do not slowly increase over time due to compaction. The difficulty is deciding at what point compaction requires remedial action. What compaction does is collapse the larger pores in soil. The responses are reductions in water infiltration rates and increases in water holding capacity that eventually provide a nearly continuously moist soil surface on which algae and moss can become established. These, then, are the initial indicators of soil compaction and the need to begin or intensify a core aerification program.

Can one core aerification per year prevent compaction from becoming a problem? Very frankly, I don't have any basis on which to answer this question. Perhaps this is feasible on relatively lightly trafficked USGA type greens. I'd sure like to hear a panel of golf course superintendents discuss this issue sometime!

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