

Ask the CSFM

Jim Hermann, CSFM is a Certified Sports Field Manager.

Ask Jim questions concerning your baseball/softball fields. E-mail him at hq@sfmanj.org

Question: We just acquired a deep tine aerator last fall. We purchased both ¾" hollow and ½" solid tines. The problem is that the field is so hard and compacted we were not able to aerate below about 3". What should I do?

Answer: In the short term I would suggest deep solid tine aerating as early in the spring and as deeply as possible. In doing so you will be taking advantage of the natural compaction relief provided by the heaving action of the deep frost we have maintained this winter. This will allow for the most effective deep tine aeration possible given your situation. You may have to acquire larger diameter solid tines to achieve maximum depth without bending. Be sure to wait until proper soil

conditions persist before attempting your aeration program. Use your soil test probe to pull core samples to confirm proper soil conditions. The soil should be moist but not so moist so as to ribbon when rolled between the thumb and forefinger. It should have the ability to crumble or separate into individual aggregates when pressure is applied.

If timing and usage permit, I would recommend follow-up core aeration in late May. By then, game play will have recompacted much of the playing area. Depending on the depth of your topsoil, I wouldn't recommend core aeration much below 3" or 4". Pulling cores from below this depth will typically bring inferior soil to the surface. Compaction from foot traffic normally does not impact on soil below this depth.

In the long term, I would begin to develop a proactive aeration strategy, which anticipates the affects of traffic and seasonal weather patterns. ♦

Field Tip

Have any necessary infield mix delivered and placed on the infield while the ground is frozen. This will minimize unnecessary handling of material and also minimize the potential for unnecessary damage to surrounding turf areas caused by heavy trucks.

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