



*The decision to add seed to divot mix is not as simple as one would assume. There are several factors that must be weighed, including the seed type itself.*

## TO SEED, OR NOT TO SEED, THAT IS THE QUESTION

BY ELLIOTT DOWLING | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

The question of whether to add seed to divot mix comes up frequently during USGA Course Consulting Service visits. While many golfers assume that seed is always added to divot mix, this is not necessarily the case.

On the surface, it would seem to make sense that seed would be added to divot mix to help divots recover more rapidly. In many instances, this approach is effective. Most commonly, bentgrass seed is added to divot mix to speed healing of divots on tees and fairways during the season. The seed varieties used differ from course to course and often the cheapest seed is selected for this purpose, which is not an ideal criterion for selecting seed. However, there is a downside to adding bentgrass seed to divot mix, namely bentgrass contamination in the rough. Well-intentioned golfers frequently fill divots in the rough, where bentgrass becomes a difficult-to-control weed. At rough height, creeping bentgrass forms a tangled, matted turf that is difficult to manage and play from.

Rather than adding seed, many courses choose to give golfers divot mix that contains only sand. A pure sand mixture allows divots to heal by providing a growing medium for the surrounding turf to spread into. Using pure sand also eliminates the risk of contamination in areas where seed is not desired. The golf course staff will fill divots when possible and they may use a seed/soil mixture because they know the correct areas for that seed.

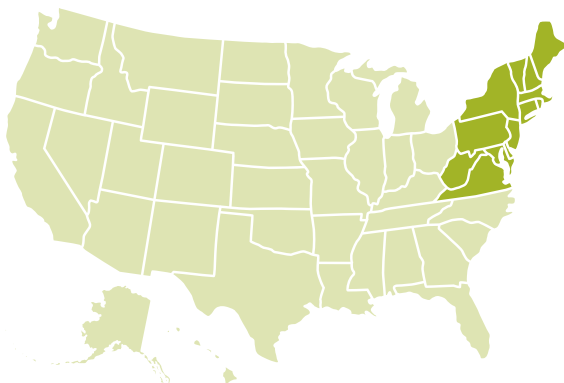
As another option, some superintendents add chewings fine fescue seed to their divot mix rather than bentgrass. There are several advantages to this approach. First, fine fescue will germinate more rapidly during summer than creeping bentgrass. Second, if fine fescue is placed into the rough, it will provide better playability than bentgrass. Even if fine fescue is the seed in the divot mix, bentgrass will still spread into the mix from the surrounding plants in the fairway, which is the intended result.

There really isn't a right or wrong answer to adding seed to divot mix. USGA agronomists have seen just about every approach to managing fairway divots and if there was a clear-cut solution, we would most certainly pass that information along. However, if divot mix is provided to golfers, it is a good idea to eliminate the seed altogether or use chewings fine fescue instead of bentgrass. If you are on the fence, experiment with the three options detailed above to determine which one works best for your facility.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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