

Green Section Record

REGIONAL UPDATE

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Daily monitoring of moisture levels and hand watering of dry areas on putting greens reduces excessive water use and unnecessary wetting agent applications.

THE IMPACT OF REDUCED GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE

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While golf courses may not be deemed essential businesses during these troubled times, failing to perform some level of golf course maintenance can cause serious damage to the course and leave a long and expensive road to recovery. Just as a rancher cannot leave his cattle unattended for weeks or months on end, the same holds true for golf courses. In the Southeast, grass is actively growing throughout the year. Especially now, with bermudagrass waking from its winter slumber with a flourish of growth. If basic maintenance tasks, like the ones listed below, are not performed then costly problems will follow.

Scouting: General daily scouting is necessary to identify and address the many problem areas that are constantly emerging on a golf course. Sprinkler head issues or irrigation breaks, left unheeded, can cause significant long-term damage if they are not addressed. Outbreaks of many different insect pests can occur suddenly and require localized insecticide applications to prevent damage. Scouting reduces the potential for turfgrass loss as well as the need for unnecessary applications of pesticides, fertilizers and other products.

Mowing: Turfgrass must continually be mowed and cared for, especially on putting greens. The grasses on greens are usually different than what is growing on the tees, fairways and roughs. These varieties were bred and developed for their ability to withstand low daily mowing. The general rule of thumb in mowing any turfgrass species is to never remove more than one third of the leaf blade in a single mow. If a golf course is shut down with no maintenance activities for two to four weeks or more, the first mowing will undoubtedly lead to scalping of the playing surface and turfgrass loss. Putting surfaces may need to be regrassed if allowed to grow, with no mowing, for too long.



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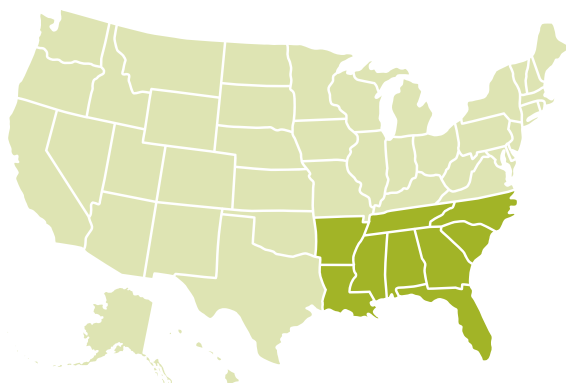
Cultivation: Aeration, venting and vertical mowing with routine sand topdressing is important to maintain soil porosity for gas exchange and water percolation. Many courses with active turfgrass growth on the putting greens perform these activities every week or every other week. When they are not performed on a scheduled, recurring basis, organic matter accumulates in the soil profile – negatively impacting rooting, turf density and surface firmness.

Pests: Weeds that normally are controlled through mowing will gain an upper hand when grass is not mowed. Mowing is the most effective prevention against weeds in turfgrass. With very few herbicides labeled and legal for emerged weed control on putting greens, weeds left to seed can produce an exponential increase in weed pressure causing problems for many years to come.

Diseases will also become more problematic when carefully maintained turf is allowed to become thick, unmown, matted grass. Many of these diseases, left unchecked or untreated with fungicide, have the potential to kill large swaths of even the best turf.

Nutrition: Putting greens receive [regular applications](#) of fertilizer. These nutrients are commonly applied with low doses of growth regulators to produce a subdued but steady growth rate. If these applications are not made on a regular basis, turf quality will deteriorate and eventually require aggressive maintenance practices for recovery.

If basic maintenance tasks are not performed, then costly problems are sure to follow. It's the routine activities in golf course maintenance that delivers the desirable playing surfaces that golfers desire and have come to expect.



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