

## PROSCAPE

By Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course architect and consultant

**Q. What is your opinion of plastic liners under sandtraps for weed control?**

**A.** The use of plastic sheets under the sand in sandtraps has been tried for a number of years with varying results. The theory is that by placing a physical barrier between the soil subgrade of the trap and the sand, weeds would be shallow-rooted and easier to control and underlying soils would not contaminate the sand. In theory this seems sensible, but as a practical matter often less than exciting results are obtained.

First, there is the problem of properly placing the plastic film on the trap floor. In new construction, it is simply laid on the base grade and the edges cut off just below the sand surface or tucked back into the topsoil. The ideal method is to tuck the edges into the topsoil about 7-8 inches below grade.

Once the plastic sheeting is installed, small holes must be made in the plastic to allow water movement to the tile drains. If these holes are too big they reduce the benefit of the plastic liner and if they are too small then they impede drainage.

After installation of the plastic is complete and the sand is placed over it, wind and water erosion or golfer use can expose the plastic to snagging. This is particularly true on slopes and crowns within the trap that commonly become devoid of sand.

Based on these observations, I suggest one might be better off to use the funds allocated for plastic installation to simply buy more or better sand and try to achieve a minimum sand depth of 6-8 inches, which will resist weed growth and keep the sand surface loose.

There is one instance where I would strongly suggest the use of plastic film as liners for sandtraps. This is where the sandtrap is placed so close to the green that when the sun heats up the exposed sand surface and causes rapid surface evaporation, it wicks water away from the surrounding soils. This situation is further complicated because of the accumulation of sand blasted out of the trap often produces a droughty soil profile. If a plastic liner were installed under this exposed sand face it would reduce the need for spot watering these dried areas and would result in a more attractive turf area.

**WTT**

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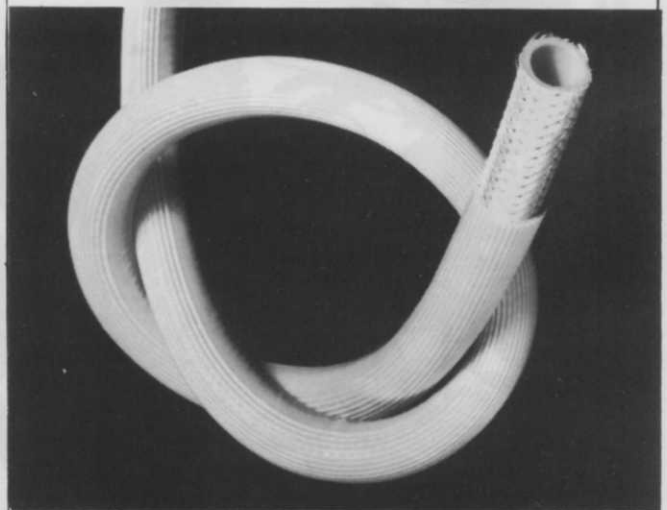


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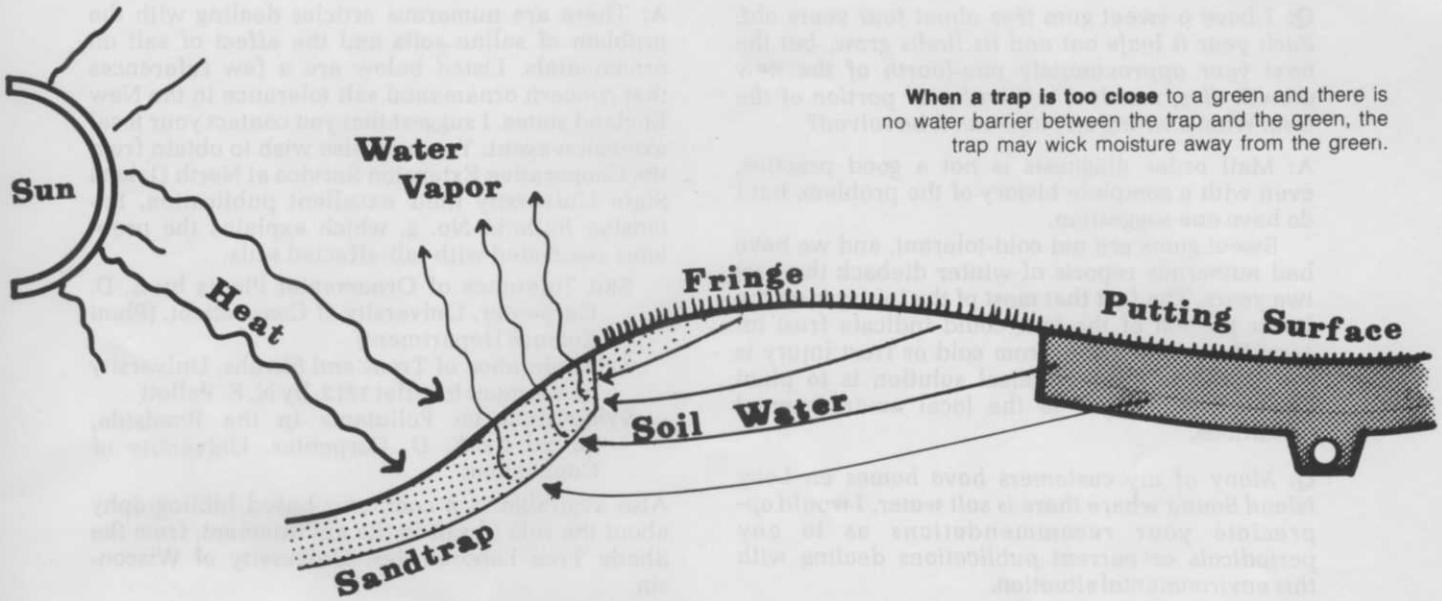
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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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