

Protect Your Investment — Protect Yourself

February 7, 1998, Anaheim, California

FOR THE 17TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Turfgrass Conference and Show. This year more than 1,600 people attended the Green Section's program on Saturday, February 7, at the Anaheim Convention Center. Joe England, Chairman of the Green Section and member of the USGA Executive Committee, welcomed the group, and James T. Snow, National Director of the USGA Green Section, served as moderator for the afternoon's program of 14 speakers who addressed this year's theme, "Protect Your Investment — Protect Yourself."

THE BEST TURF TIPS OF 1997

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, 10 of the Green Section's agronomists reported on some of the helpful ideas and ingenious innovations they came across while visiting golf course superintendents in every part of the country during 1997. The Turf Tips appear throughout this issue.

A Turn For The Better

A simple change to your aerifier can provide a great benefit.

by **DARIN S. BEVARD**

IF THE TRUTH is told, most people don't like aerification. Superintendents don't like it, and golfers absolutely hate it. The disruption caused cannot be denied. Golfers have to tolerate it, while superintendents must restore these surfaces to optimal playability as rapidly as possible.

Whenever golf cart and maintenance equipment traffic is concentrated in roughs and fairways, soil compaction is a big concern. Where traffic is not as intense, thatch can become a problem, especially in creeping bentgrass fairways. Soil compaction problems and thatch accumulation can result in less efficient use of water and other agronomic inputs.

One solution to these problems is aerification. However, cleaning up the cores after aerification can be difficult, especially where heavy clay soils are prominent. The sheer size of fairways and roughs makes collecting cores impractical for many, and core collection may be undesirable if a topdressing application is not utilized. As such, mechanical drag mats are often utilized to break up cores. The cores should be somewhat dry for the best shattering effect. On the other hand, if they become too dry, destroying the cores may require repeated mechanical dragging, which can be stressful to the turf. Anything that can be done to reduce



By simply turning the tines so their openings face forward rather than to the rear, cores can be shattered during the aeration process, significantly reducing the need for mechanical dragging.

the amount of dragging would benefit the stand of turf.

Guy Ostrander, golf course superintendent at Talbot Country Club, Easton, Maryland, utilizes a simple but effective technique that greatly reduces the amount of dragging needed to

destroy aerification cores. Although Mr. Ostrander does not claim to have *invented* this practice, his program provides a good example of what can be achieved.

Usually when *open-spoon* tines are used for aerification of roughs and fairways, the openings are turned toward the rear of the aerifier. The cores are then thrown behind the machine, usually remaining in one piece. Simply turning the openings of the tines to face forward can provide a great benefit. This change causes the cores to be thrown toward the front of the machine. As the cores are thrown forward, they are shattered as the machine passes over them again. As a result, this initial shattering allows the smaller pieces to be more easily reincorporated into the turf, and a significant amount of mechanical dragging can be eliminated. A more efficient and less stressful process can lead to healthier turf and less golfer aggravation.

So try turning your open-spoon tines to the front, so the cores are thrown forward. You may find it to be a turn for the better.

DARIN BEVARD has just completed his first year as an agronomist in the Mid-Atlantic Region. With the first year under his belt, he will take his "turn" with a full schedule in 1998.