

A Shower A Day Fills The Holes OK

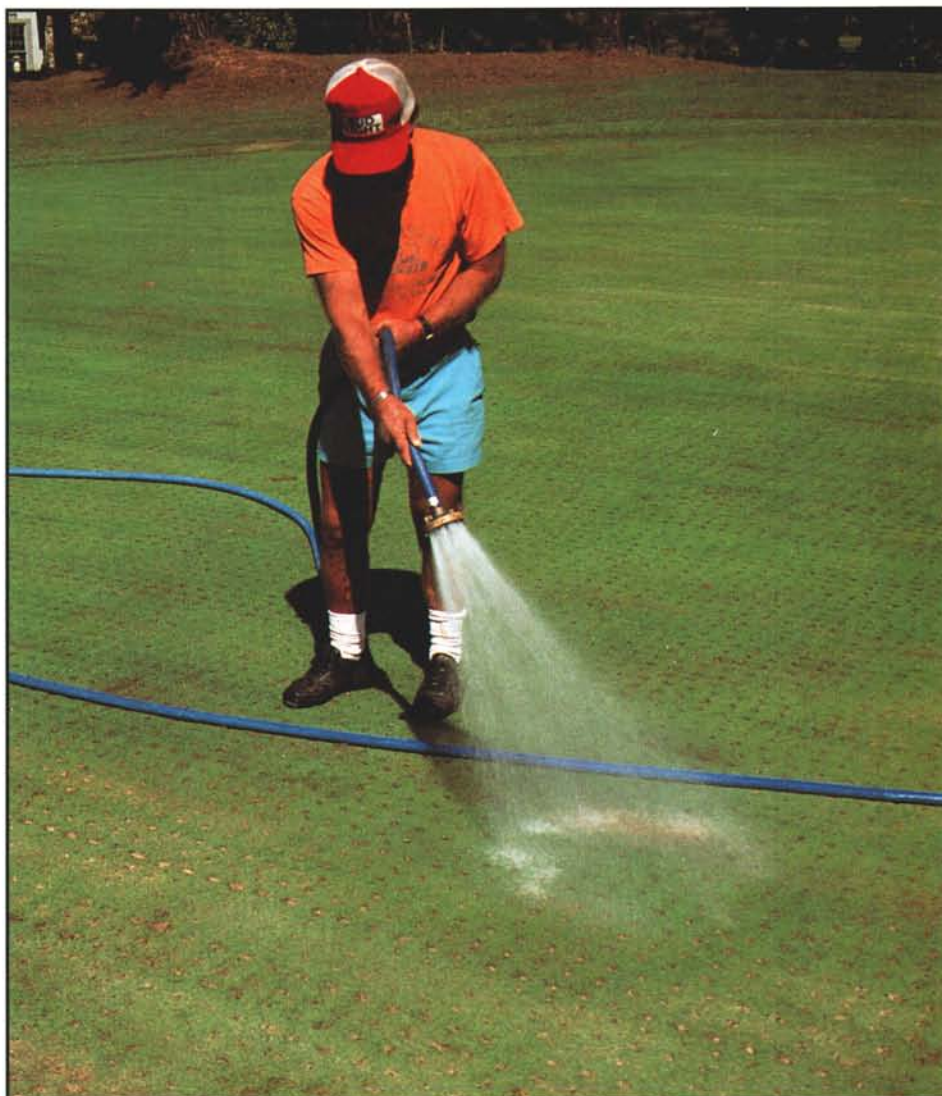
Two nozzles and a syringe hose can improve the incorporation of topdressing.

by **CHRIS HARTWIGER**

DOES THIS COMMENT sound familiar? "Just when our greens start to look good, our superintendent aerifies them." Putting green aerification is a necessary part of managing putting greens, but unfortunately this practice is misunderstood by golfers. Apply a heavy sand topdressing to fill the aerification holes and the complaints continue. As a result, a golf course superintendent looks forward to aerification and topdressing as much as a golfer looks forward to a double bogey. If the quantity of aerification is limited at your golf course, even more emphasis is needed on quality. This turf tip will describe a simple process using a syringe hose to help achieve the maximum benefits when aerifying and topdressing.

The first step in the process is to use the aerifier of your choice to aerify the greens. This tip will work effectively with any size tines used on the aerifier. Once the greens have been aerified, remove the cores from the greens. Notice that many of the holes are blocked as a result of the aerification and core removal process. Try an experiment to see what percentage of the holes are blocked. Pick a random area one foot square anywhere on the green and determine the percentage of holes that are completely open versus the percentage of holes that have some degree of blockage. Once this turf tip is performed, repeat this process to evaluate your success.

Applying sand topdressing to fill the aerification holes usually is the next step in the process. However, any stubble remaining on the green and any blockage of the aerification holes will



A syringe hose with a shower nozzle is used to eliminate any blockage in the aerification holes.

hamper efforts to fill the holes with sand topdressing. Two simple attachments to a syringe hose will reduce the blockage of the aerification holes and improve the backfilling of the holes with sand.

Once the cores have been removed, attach a pressure nozzle to the syringe hose. This nozzle will create a narrow stream of water under strong pressure. From the center of the green, use the stream of water to push any stubble or uncollected cores off the greens. This process will clean off the surface of the greens, but will not eliminate any blockage of the holes.

Next, connect a shower head attachment to the end of the syringe hose. Direct the flow of water down toward the holes to eliminate any blockage. A light shower is all it will take to open up these holes. A crew member will learn rapidly the appropriate amount of water it takes to reduce the blockage.

Sand topdressing should not be applied immediately after this process. The greens will need some time to dry to avoid clumping of the topdressing. Typically, if aerification is performed in the morning, the greens will be ready for topdressing in the mid-afternoon. Once the sand is applied, it will be much easier to incorporate it into the holes because most of the blockage has been eliminated. More efficient incorporation of sand into the holes will create a smoother playing surface that heals more uniformly.

Aerification is a practice that is performed only a few times per year. Implementing this tip may increase the project by half a day, but the quality of the results will make it all worthwhile.

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