



# The Mountain State Greenletter

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West Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association

## Board of Director's Message

**I would like to wish everyone happy holidays and a healthy new year. Thank you for all the support throughout the 2023 season and I look forward to 2024!**

**The board will be meeting in January. If anyone would like to host the meeting please get in touch with Amber Breed or me.**

**Best wishes,**

**Mitch Roush  
President, Riverside Golf Course**

*Merry  
Christmas*

Happy  
Holidays



As we celebrate this holiday season with all of our friends and family, we wanted to take a minute to thank you.

We hope your holiday is filled with cheer, joy, warm memories, and happiness.

Your Harrell's representatives,



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# When a Water View Isn't Good

By Elliott L. Dowling, regional director, East Region

Standing water can cause turf decline at any time of the year. In summer, standing water can heat up and essentially boil or suffocate plants. In winter, rather than scalding grass, water can freeze over the grass. Large areas of standing water can freeze quickly and stay that way for long periods of time during winter. If the turf stays covered by ice for too long, winter injury is possible.

There are several factors that lead to winter injury, it is a complex issue and its causes can sometimes be perplexing. However, we know that ice encasement is one way to bring on winter injury. If you have standing water on the course during winter, especially on putting greens or fairways, improving surface drainage will help reduce the risk of turf damage.

Rain at this time of year is going to sit longer on the surface for several reasons. There could be a slight frost layer just below the surface, which will impede water infiltration. Grass also doesn't have the same water requirements in winter as in the summer, so absorption by the plant is slow, if it occurs at all. Shorter days and cooler temperatures also mean slower evaporation.

Internal drain lines are helpful, but when the ground freezes water can't get to the drainage. In this scenario, good surface drainage is the only way to move water off of the playing surfaces and into the rough or other areas where damage is less likely to occur and will have less effect on playability.

If standing water plagues your course and is often an area of frustration, winter is a good time to work on some of the pockets to get a jump-start on the next season. Focus on high-profile areas like greens and fairways first and move out from there.

Northeast Region Agronomists

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Standing water in winter is concerning. The water will likely linger and could potentially freeze, leading to larger problems. frost at the golf course even if your yard is totally clear.

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# Deep-Tine Aeration Now Means Better Turf Later

By Brian Gietka, agronomist, East Region

Throughout the Northeast, golf courses are shifting into winter maintenance mode now that temperatures have cooled down and most of the leaves have fallen. This break in the action is a great time to deep-tine aerate greens, a cultural practice that has many benefits but is often omitted from the agronomic program. Aerating deeply with solid tines requires no cleanup, is minimally disruptive to play and should be performed at least once annually. Traditional core aeration impacts a maximum depth of 4 to 5 inches and improves soil physical characteristics for better rooting and water infiltration in the upper rootzone. Yet over time, the layer below the frequently core-aerated portion of the rootzone can become more compact, slowing water infiltration and impeding root depth. Shallow rooting and excess moisture near the surface does not give turf a great growing environment to withstand the rigors of summer.

Penetrating this deeper layer is necessary for good turf health, but setting a deep-tine aerator to maximum depth when significant compaction is present can disrupt the surface. Instead, set the machine for 1 to 3 inches below the traditional shallow aeration depths to start. This penetrates the compacted layer while minimizing surface heaving. Another beneficial tactic to use when deep-tine aeration is performed for the first time in many years is to increase tine spacing. As more deep-tine aeration is performed, the profile deep in the rootzone loosens, allowing you to increase the maximum depth and reduce spacing without serious surface heaving. As tines are driven deeply into the profile they also tend to “kick” laterally, further fracturing the subsurface.

Deep-tining greens increases aeration porosity for improved water infiltration and gas exchange, creating a better growing environment. The deep-tine holes also don't disrupt a surface like hollow tines and generally provide acceptable ball roll afterward. The turf is growing slowly at this time of year so aeration channels remain open for water to infiltrate the surface all winter long, reducing the risk of crown hydration injury. An additional benefit is when precipitation fills the channels, freeze-thaw cycles will further fracture the soil profile, increasing aeration porosity and encouraging deep, strong roots. Implementing a deep-tine aeration program will give you some peace of mind this winter and improve turf health next summer.

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Late fall is an ideal time to deep-tine aerate putting greens in the Northeast.



*Rich Puskavich, Walker Supply - Vendor Cup Champion  
Andy Bates, Bridgeport CC - Century Cup Champion*

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