

Different strokes for different turfs

BY FLOYD PERRY

One of the necessary tasks for quality turf strength and spot refurbishment of worn areas is the ability to penetrate and aerate that surface with various utensils at different times of the growing season.

The human body can live for approximately 7 minutes without oxygen; how long can our athletic field roots survive without oxygen? How long will your turf survive with a "parking lot" surface?

Many of our national research colleges have recommended since the early 1950s that core removal was the best technical manner to alleviate com-

paction and allow sufficient oxygen and moisture to reach the sub-soil root structure. During that post-war era most sports were just seasonal and there was only biannual turf maintenance to maintain quality, which might have been sufficient.

But what about today's extended schedules and multi-seasonal field turf use? How do we as progressive groundskeepers handle cool season turf fields without irrigation? What about baseball and softball outfields that become fall soccer/football practice fields? Aeration options have changed, too.

Sometimes if we can alternate our soil penetration with different tines, especially when afield is in play or practices are intense, then the turf root has a chance to consume sufficient oxygen and moisture to continue the growing process.

Since our society consistently watches television and sees prime game fields that are prepared by outstanding groundskeepers with superior equipment, they are not tuned into our youth fields that are over-used, under-irrigated, and improperly maintained due to time and funding. "Turf grows by the inch and is killed by the foot," so let's attempt to give that blade a little extended life by breaking up the surface more than twice a year. And with minimal disruption of turf evenness so play can continue.

Today's aeration techniques and technology have increased tremendously since time and field use has become a pair of enemies. Manufacturers have created various alternatives to core pulling since the downtime and core elimination process is very extensive and sometimes extremely time-consuming. Here are just a couple of variations, illustrated by the accompanying photos (courtesy of Floyd Perry):

- A. Shallow core pulling
- B. Fracturing
- C. Deep tine/soil core
- D. Drill and fill or drilling only
- E. Water injection

Since time, manpower, finances, and Mother Nature are many times working against us, we progressive groundskeepers must keep on the lookout for innovative ways to breathe life into our sub-surface soil without affecting the game day performance.

Core v. tines

Core aeration improves growing conditions by loosening soil and reducing thatch. However, solid-tine aerators and deep hollow tine units are more effective at solving drainage problems that result from deeper compacted layers, and thus are more often used for sports fields.

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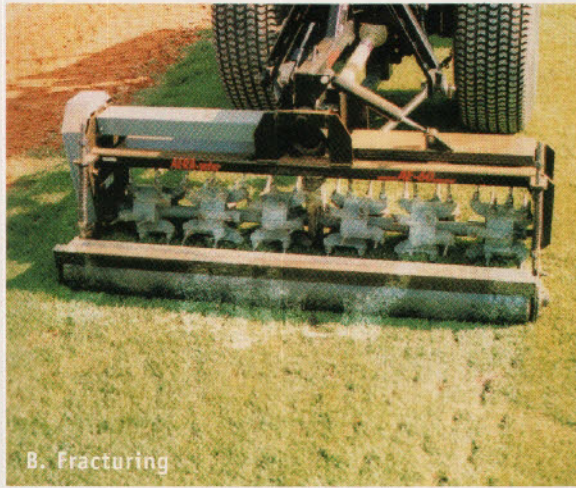
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A. Shallow core pulling



B. Fracturing



C. Deep tine/soil core



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