

# Advice for better topdressing/spreading results

*Editor's note: We asked some manufacturers of topdressing machines and spreaders to give readers three quick pieces of advice.*

1. Before topdressing, always take a soil sample to determine what your field really needs. Many sports turf managers just look at what golf courses are doing and think everything they do will also work for them. Even golf courses topdress for different reasons. An example would be: Do you have soil with heavy clay content that has poor permeability and lacks the ability to hold moisture? Then you may want to consider topdressing with compost or a compost blend in conjunction with aeration.

2. Develop a strategy or plan covering how to best improve your field. You may have to work with a local extension agent to ensure you are doing what is right. Write the strategy down and then follow it, monitoring your results and making adjustments as needed.

3. I know budgets are tight, but if you are going to buy a topdresser, buy as big a unit as your budget will allow; it will save on trips to and from the pile. The final objective of topdressing is to improve the soil in your field, so that it will support healthy turf growth and improve field playability.

-John Bentley, Earth & Turf Products, LLC

1. Use a quality brush
2. Use dry materials
3. Aerate first

-Paul Hollis, Redexim Charterhouse, Inc.

1. Place the sand as close to the field as possible as it takes longer to load and travel back to the pile than it does to spread each load.

2. Use a calibration program (one is available on [www.dakota-peat.com](http://www.dakota-peat.com)) to insure you have enough sand for the entire field. I like to run it on the short side so I can have some left over at the end to use for touch up or high traffic areas that need a little more.

3. Stay on the topdressing program; it's not a one-time fix.

-Randy Dufault, Dakota Peat

1. Precisely applying the product is most important. Precision spreading will cut waste and cost, improve plant growth by applying the precise product at the correct amount, which in turn reduces environmental impact by reducing run off of product by over application

2. You get precise applications through correct gate openings, calibrations to ground speed, and spinner spread control for width.

3. If you can keep your speed constant while at the same time controlling the fertilizer flow at a pre set amount and the spinner speed at a preset width you will have accurate spread.

-Bob Brophy, Turfco Manufacturing

1. Adjust the belt speeds and metering gate before topdressing a large area. These adjustments, as well as machine ground speed, control the amount of topdressing distributed onto the turf. It is important that these settings are pre-set before topdressing to maintain consistency throughout the area to be topdressed. Pick a small area to fine-tune the settings before going out to the main area. Otherwise, different areas will be covered with different levels of topdressing as the settings are fine-tuned. As you get more familiar with your topdressing needs, it will be much easier to establish these settings.

2. Operate at a constant throttle setting. Many topdressers use the hydraulics of a traction unit to control the speed of the belt and spinners. Some operators have a tendency to speed up and slow down their ground speeds, which will also speed up and slow down the belt and spinner speeds, leading to inconsistent topdressing. Once you have established the initial settings and select a throttle

**MOST PRODUCTION,**

36" Z-Plug Aerator  
~2 acres per hour production

Z-Max Sprayer/Spreader  
-with optional foam marker  
~6 acres per hour production

**No other machine has more productivity or reliability.**

**Z PERIOD.**

L.T. Rich Products, Inc. (877) 482-2040

# Tools & Equipment

and ground speed, stick with it for consistency.

3. Make straight lines. For a consistent topdressing application, it is important to maintain a straight line to minimize overlap. Curved lines lead to less efficient topdressing, heavy topdressing in overlaps, and possible wheel-tracking from making turns with a heavy load

-Brad Aldridge, John Deere Golf

1. Know your turf. What is the purpose of your field? What is it composed of? How much water does it retain? Will there be higher traffic in one area than another? How often will it be used? Each field is different; the soil and water requirements are different. Knowing and understanding your turf will help you make the best decisions on how to nourish and maintain your fields.

2. Use the right material. Remember the old adage, "You are what you eat"? Your field turf is the same, the material you put on your turf is directly related to the results you will receive. If you need to amend the soil and provide nutrients you should use the best product available to provide a lush, soft, sports field. Never use a topdressing product without a thorough understanding and testing of the particle size of the material. Sand is a good example. It is a long-time, excellent choice for topdressing, as it is readily available and somewhat inexpensive. However, it

is important to perform a particle size analysis for the material, and never assume that a named sand will always be suitable for your needs. Numbers and names of sands can have tremendous variation, as their original purpose was usually for road building or construction, not sports fields.

3. Have the right equipment for the right job. Topdressing requires precise material application. If the equipment you have does not apply the material optimally, it's like throwing money out the window because your efforts and expense of material and labor will be wasted. There are many topdressers on the market; do your homework to make sure you have the right equipment for your turf, application and budget. If your budget can afford it, purchase a step up so you have the ability to expand the use of the topdresser as your needs increase. A field will go through stages of growth and the applications can range from spreading a variety of materials (topsoil, fertilizer, topdressing mix, lime, crumb rubber, etc) in a variety of conditions using a variety of attachments (brush, dual spinner, beaters) throughout the years. If you have the most versatile, well-made topdresser you will be saving money in the long term while having the best fields.

- Tina M Merrill, Millcreek Manufacturing ■

## Topdressing critical to safety

Topdressing is one of those cultural practices that, along with aeration, are extremely important in providing safe playing surfaces. Topdressing fills divots, levels the playing surface for a true ball bounce and topdressing with the proper material can increase infiltration. When combining topdressing with aeration you can also begin to improve the composition of the rootzone making it drain better and provide a better medium for exchanging carbon dioxide and oxygen.

The most important factor in process of topdressing is choosing the proper topdressing material. Sand or a combination of sand and peat are the most popular topdressing materials although it is imperative that a particle size analysis is performed on both the topdressing material and the field soil to make sure they are compatible.

Although topdressing alone is helpful, the best time is right after aeration so the topdressing material can be incorporated deep into the rootzone. The bottom line is that a topdressing program of adding ½ inch of topdressing annually will pay huge dividends in making your athletics fields safer, more playable and better looking.

-Dale Getz, CSFM, The Toro Company



### Topdresser for ProGator UVs

Specifically designed for the John Deere ProGator 2020 and 2030 utility vehicles, the TD100 Top Dresser's hopper is made of galvanized steel that resists corrosion and is supported by a steel frame for strength. For even distribution, a fixed-speed nylon/polyester cordless conveyor belt moves material under the full-width metering gate and through a rotating brush for even distribution. The conveyor belt and rotating brush are powered by a hydraulic motor that operates off the ProGator hydraulic system. The hopper capacity is 12 cu. feet full or 19 cu. feet heaped. The rated capacity is 1500 lb., and the spreading width is 56 inches. The opening adjusts from 0 to 3 inches.

[www.deere.com](http://www.deere.com)



### New MultiSpread model available

Earth & Turf LLC introduces its new MultiSpread model 320, a 1-cubic yard topdresser with exclusive, wide-spread beater, for turf maintenance professionals. Spreads topdressing materials, infield mix, calcined clay, crumbed rubber, and grass clippings. Two-wheel ground drive or available hydraulic drive with 26 x 12.00-12 turf tires insures easy pulling by 20-hp tractors. Prices start under \$5,000.

[www.earthandturf.com](http://www.earthandturf.com)



### Easy Spread now in two sizes

The self-loading Easy Spread is now available in two sizes, 52 and 63 inch working widths), and is designed to be loaded, driven to the site, and used without the operator ever leaving the seat. An electric switch, activated from the tractor cab, engages the hydraulically powered distribution drum, and a variable control valve sets the rotational speed of the drum. The spreading thickness is independent of tractor speed and can be varied from a light dusting to ½ inch. The unit is fully supported by a 3-point lift, and can spread wet or dry granular material, or salt on winter surfaces.

[www.redexim.com](http://www.redexim.com)