



Fig. 13. Adding a thin layer of soil by topdressing (left) and incorporating by dragging a brush over it (right).

Table 3. Approximate soil volumes needed to topdress 5000 square feet to various depths.

Topdressing depth (inches)	Soil volume needed (cubic yards)
1/32 (0.03)	0.5
1/16 (0.06)	1.0
1/8 (0.13)	2.0
1/4 (0.25)	4.0
1/2 (0.50)	8.0

If the objective of topdressing is to change the characteristic of the underlying soil, then a heavy topdressing program following numerous coring over a period of years is required. Fine textured soils that drain poorly are usually topdressed with a material that is 80% or greater sand. Favorable results are not guaranteed by this practice. However, once a material is chosen for topdressing, it is best to stick to it. If different materials are used for each topdressing, undesirable layers effect will develop.

If thatch control is the main objective of topdressing, the amount and frequency of topdressing is governed by rate of thatch accumulation. Thatch layering between 0.25 and 0.5 inch on golf greens is desirable. This relatively thin thatch layer cushions (holds) the approaching golf shot better and also provides a certain amount of protection of bermudagrass crowns from traffic. However, once this thickness is exceeded, frequent topdressing along with possible coring and verticutting are necessary. A suggested amount topdressing when

thatch is not excessive is approximately 1.0 cubic yard per 5000 sq.ft. If over time this relatively light rate is not keeping up with decomposing the thatch layer, then frequency of application should be shortened as well as topdressing rate increased.

If the objective of topdressing is just to provide routine smoothing of the playing surface, then light, frequent topdressings are suggested. Matting the green following topdressing results in the material being dragged into low spots. Surface irregularities of the green are reduced and the area is somewhat leveled. Topdressing with 0.5 to 1.0 cubic yard per 5000 sq.ft. of green surface every 2 to 4 weeks provides a smoother, truer playing surface. Light topdressing is also performed approximately 10 to 14 days prior to major club tournaments to increase speed of greens and provide a smoother putting surface. Frequent, light topdressing should also be applied on new greens to cover stolons and to smooth the surface. This should be performed every two to four weeks until complete cover or desired smoothness is achieved.

Topdressing materials

Deciding on what material will be used for topdressing is one of the superintendents most important long-term management decisions. Using undesirable materials can be disastrous and ruin the integrity of many initially well built facilities. A competent soil testing laboratory should be consulted to test the sands in question to be used to slowly change the rootzone of the green.

When the underlying soil of the playing surface is unsatisfactory, a decision will be needed on whether to rebuild the facility or try to slowly