

Signs of Spring

By: Wayne Slaton, Golf Course Superintendent

Spring seems to have started earlier in 2026. I have learned over the years of experience, along with what I was taught by my Dad and Grandad, and others with the old-world knowledge, to watch for the signs of spring that are letting us know the warm season turf is going to start breaking dormancy. The birds and wildlife are a little more active along with watching for things like the deer antler sheds and when the Mesquite starts to put on leaf, it is a sign of warmer weather and maybe only a few cold snaps remain.


A picture I took a few weekends ago:



As the warmer temperatures return our golf course, turf begins to wake up from winter dormancy. We are preparing to do the best we can to help our golf course playing surface perform well. This is more than just irrigation, or “watering the grass”. Much planning goes into preparing our golf course for the spring to summer playing season, and the many upcoming tournaments we host such as the UIL1A State Championships. With the upcoming tournaments,

and unforgiving central Texas weather, timing and adaptability is everything for our team to keep our golf course in good playing condition. Let's book the date for That's great to book a date, yet the Texas weather doesn't care what your plans are. You will have to adapt and adjust to the weather to be successful. It is better to know the window of opportunity to have success. Just because you aerate every year on March 16th and apply pre-emergent the week after, doesn't mean you will have the same results every year. You will need to pay attention to nature's indicators.

Aerate first and then follow with pre-emergent. Some fertilizers can be applied before, after, or even along with aerations. Pre-emergents work by adding a thin layer of chemistry on the surface to impede and prevent unwanted plants (weeds) from their first sprout. "Speak English WayneO" most of y'all would tell me. If you aerate after you have applied pre-emergent, you just poked a hole in your pre-emergent layer and that is not going to be very effective. Just so we all know what a weed is, let's start with the definition of a weed:

 Wikipedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weed>

Weed

A weed is a **plant considered undesirable in a particular situation, growing where it conflicts with human preferences, needs, or goals.**



The word "pre" means before the "weed" you want to control germinates. For you homeowners, you will need to have the plant you want to control on the pre-emergent label that you plan on applying before the plant germinates. Just make sure to read the label to ensure the product is applicable for your type of lawn. Many sad stories about "I killed my lawn with the wrong application of weed & feed" I have heard. READ the label please, and use proper applications, they are very important. More is not better. The rate of application is critical for your success. On all chemistry used for turf grass management, the label is the law.

In March, we began to prepare our golf course for the season. We aerated fairways & roughs by "slicing" the turf. It is an aeration with pull behind type equipment hooked to a tractor and one that is pulled by a pro gator. See pictures below.





Other aeration types are solid tines and coring tines as shown below:



We also will be using the Air2G2 on our greens again this year to minimize golf disruption. We have had the Air2G2 since 2015 and it has been an important part of our cultural practices for keeping our greens alive and performing. For more information about the Air2G2 see youtube link and picture below:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XeWhtBwsbg>

We plan to core aerate our tee boxes and range tee in early April.

For those of you wondering about our full aeration schedule, we are currently planning to aerate the putting greens in early June. Of course, Mother Nature has the final say!

Aeration is a key part of maintaining healthy turf. By perforating the soil, we reduce compaction, improve drainage, and increase oxygen flow to the roots. This helps the grass grow stronger and more resilient, leading to a better playing surface and improving overall course conditions.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation while we take the steps necessary to ensure best possible long-term health of our golf course.

I hope this has been informative and educational. Looking forward to the great golf weather ahead and hope to see you on our golf course soon.