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ent varieties would be enough for a standard infield, the Ranger crew sows almost 500 pounds. "On average, the 419 would be growing by April," admits Anglea. "But in this area we can have late cold spells or even snow in March. Overseeding is an extra touch that makes the field perfect for the players when the season opens."

By June, the ryegrass surrenders to the bermuda and Anglea's maintenance program. "We don't have a problem with transition here," he explains. "For 81 games a year, this field is the best we can make it."

The crew clearly shares his goal. In addition to Richards, Randy Cummings, John Kirchner, and Ron Masters are almost fanatical about details, from the straight lines in the mowing pattern to the matching slopes of the mound on the field and those in the bullpens. Arlington Stadium is smaller than some of its rivals. But visiting teams like to play there because of the field. It's enough to make all teams wish they had bermudagrass in their stadiums.

MANAGING A KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS INFIELD

By Greg Petry

Maintaining bluegrass infields requires a combination of people management and agronomics. Although bluegrass "heals" relatively quickly following stress, it cannot take unrestricted use placed on it by scheduled games, practices, and special events. Whether the field is bluegrass or another species, guidelines or ground rules should be established to control its use. Cooperation and communication must exist between the groundskeeper, those scheduling the field, and those using it.

Kentucky bluegrass is characterized as a "cool season" grass but it must withstand extremely hot summer baseball seasons. It forms a dense, smooth, dark green playing surface ideal for baseball. Kentucky bluegrass spreads vigorously by underground stems called rhizomes to quickly fill in worn areas. The rhizomes also hold the turf together to help it resist damage from tearing.

Irrigation is a must to achieve and maintain a quality bluegrass infield. Often late spring and summer have high temperatures coupled with drought. Many bluegrass infields are installed with great pride and expectations, only to deteriorate because water is not available in sufficient quantities during critical periods of heat and drought. During the summer, when game play is at its peak, rainfall is at its lowest level and temperatures are at a maximum. The result can be fatal for a bluegrass infield.

Therefore, when constructing an infield, don't even consider a pure bluegrass infield unless an adequate supply of water is available at the site. If installing an irrigation system is not feasible, consider a "skinned" infield until irrigation can be installed.

The growth characteristics of bluegrass require that an intensive maintenance be established. Proper irrigation, fertilization, aerification, and overseeding must be programmed on a regular schedule to maintain quality bluegrass throughout the playing season.

The maintenance program begins in April with a soil test to check nutrients and soil pH. Kentucky bluegrass grows best in a pH range of between six and seven. As the crew begins edging and dirt work, a preemergence herbicide (Balan) is applied to the turf.

In May, the infield is aerified twice with hollow 1/2-inch tines followed by treatment with granular sulfur as indicated by the soil test. A slow-release 19-5-9 fertilizer is then broadcast on the field. Emerged weeds are knocked out with Trimec and the disease-control program begins with an application of Chipco 26019 for brown patch. During May the irrigation system is checked, repaired, and adjusted. A twice-a-week mowing schedule is put into effect using reel mowers set at 1¾ inch.

As temperatures rise in June, a wetting agent is applied to assure deep and uniform wetting of the soil and to help reduce the frequency of irrigation. Grubs are treated with Diazinon and Bayleton is applied for dollar spot control.

Today people are very environmentally conscious of pesticide applications. Therefore consideration should be given to applying pesticides only when necessary and only at rates needed to control the problem. Consult a specialist before including pesticides in your program.

In July, humidity coupled with high temperatures requires close attention to irrigation and diseases. A half rate of wetting agent is applied and irrigation is scheduled only to run in the early morning instead of at night. Efforts to control brown patch, dollar spot, and summer patch are stepped up with an application of Bayleton early in the month and Daconil 2787 toward the end of the month. Fungicides are rotated to avoid any problems with resistance.

August is tournament time in our district's parks. The turf is aerified early in the month. Potassium and phosphorus are applied as a 6-25-25 fertilizer before overseeding with a mix of three Kentucky bluegrasses and three perennial ryegrasses. We borrow a topdresser from the parks district's Bonnie Brook Golf Course to apply a sandy loam for Grosche Field, our main stadium. Any low spots are

touched up by hand. By tournament time the turf is back in top shape. When the tournaments are over, Banner is applied to get us through the remaining hot portion of the summer.

Maintenance continues in September even though use of the field slows. When the weather cools, we aerify a third time and fertilize with a pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of 18-18-18 sulfur-coated urea. Mowing continues while irrigation is set to be deep and infrequent.

Winter preparation begins in October. Another pound of nitrogen in the form of 27-3-12 with Nitroform and sulfur-coated urea is broadcast following aeration. Since we don't have time to spoon-feed the fields like a golf course superintendent might spoon-feed his greens, we rely on slow-release products. At the end of the month Chipco 26019 is applied for control of snow mold.

Winter preparation is completed in November by draining and blowing out the irrigation system. All accessories, such as foul ball netting and bases, are removed for repair and storage. Planning for the next year begins immediately.

In addition to a monthly schedule, a baseball facility needs clear pregame and postgame procedures. Pregame work is centered around preparing the dirt and marking the field. Postgame work is more oriented toward the turf.

A thorough inspection after each game or practice will help heal turf scars. Replace divots immediately. Apply a handful of seed (pregerminated preferred) and topdress mix to scuffed areas and where divots cannot be replaced. Turf areas in front of the mound, the batters' boxes, coaches' boxes, and on-deck circles receive more wear than others. For this reason they need frequent aerification, overseeding and topdressing. Eventually, wear and tear may take their toll and sodding may be necessary.

Cooperation between the groundskeeper and those scheduling and using the field is essential to its season-long quality. Create a positive working relationship with players and coaches. Educate the leagues, school, and park departments regarding turf management and field construction. Let them know about the personnel and budget constraints you work under. They will respect you and what you are trying to accomplish.

Communicate with a liaison from the groups and show them what it takes to monitor the quality field they expect. Explain that fields should be rotated to give them time to rejuvenate. If possible, practices or drills should be held on areas away from the infield of "showcase" fields. Establish ground rules for use with players and coaches so they can share in the resulting quality of their home field.

Editor's Note: Greg Petry is Park Superintendent for the Waukegan Park District, Waukegan, IL, and a previous winner of the Baseball Diamond of the Year Award.

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