# STMA MESSAGE

Sports Turf Managers Association

## February is for Looking Forward

*By: Steve Trusty*
STMA Executive Director

While others dream of hearts and flowers during the month of February, sports turf managers dream of perfect fields. Though the realization of those dreams isn't nearly as easy as a trip to the florist, the sports turf managers action plan, fined-tuned during the off-season, becomes the basis for the safe, aesthetically-pleasing and highly-playable fields with thriving turf, properly prepared pitchers mounds, batters boxes and basepaths and precise lines, stripes and logos that will soon come.

February is a transition month for most sports turf managers. Winter rains slow the beginning of spring sports in southern climates while actual on-the-field practice and play won't begin for a month or so in the nation's mid-section and northern regions. Budgets have been prepared. Materials have been ordered. Crews are set, or hiring is underway.

It's during this brief interval that some of the most important work of the entire year takes place. Many of you had the opportunity to participate in STMA's 9th Annual Conference and Exhibition this past January. Many of you took part in special sports turf sessions at regional turf conferences and in events developed by your regional chapter of STMA. You've soaked up information through formal presentations, polished techniques in hands-on demonstrations, and perhaps most importantly, you've compared your program with those of other sports turf managers through one-on-one discussions. Your plans to put all this information to work on your fields contributes to the ever-increasing level of professionalism within the sports turf industry.

You can keep fine-tuning your program and finding solutions to the problems that inevitably occur during the event-packed playing season through the educational and networking opportunities of the Sports Turf Managers Association. STMA's role is that of facilitator, a resource to assist you in making the connections that will help you do your job better. You're not alone out there. Because of the willingness of STMA members to share their successes and failures in every area of field care and management, you have a support network that benefits everyone.

During the past two years, STMA has added services and doubled in membership. A large measure of credit goes to the hard work of the 1996 and 1997 Board of Directors and Committee members. THANK YOU!! Credit also goes to those of you in the trenches who took the time to share your expertise, your successes and your horror stories; who encouraged others to face their challenges; and who moved the level of your sports turf program up one more notch. THANK YOU!!

On behalf of the current membership of STMA, I invite those non-members in the sports turf industry to join us now. By working together, this association has made tremendous strides. With an even greater number of industry members working together, STMA will continue to increase its level of professionalism and the recognition of the important role sports turf managers play in creating, maintaining and promoting better and safer sports turf areas.

# TIP O' THE MONTH

## Is Sulfur Effective for Lowering pH in Turfed Soils?

Soil testing is important in lawns to help determine the soil pH and fertilization needs. This is especially true for potassium and phosphorus fertilization. Experts have established the acceptable level of soil pH for turf to be between 6.0 and 7.5.

Some soil testing labs recommend applying sulfur to lawns that exceed these limits to reduce the soil pH. Unfortunately, though, it is only possible to apply 5 lbs. of sulfur for every 1000 sq. ft. of turfgrass per application. Increasing this amount can expose lawns to extensive damage from burning. Further, labs suggest limiting sulfur application to twice a year. At this rate, it takes many, many years to significantly lower the soil's pH level.

To better solve the problem, slightly increase the annual nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and possibly iron that you add to the lawn. This strategic fertilization tackles the problem more quickly and safely than the sulfur solution. Alternatively, you can till sulfur into a soil at much higher rates prior to turf establishment to reduce pH levels. ❑

*The above tip comes from Zac Reicher, Assistant Professor / Turfgrass Extension Specialist for the Turfgrass Science Program at Purdue University, via the program's web sight: http://www.agry.purdue.edu. If you have a tip you'd like to share, send it to* sportsTURF *2101 S. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights, IL 60005, or send an e-mail message to sberens@mail.aip.com.*

**Correction:** In our January issue, the article entitled "Taking a Closer Look at Rootzones" contained incorrect illustrations. In figure one, the two photos of electron micrographs should be reversed. In figure two, all four micrographs are incorrect. We apologize for the error.