

Seed vs. Sod

Have questions? Send them to Dave at: ISU, Hort. Dept., Ames, IA 50011.



by Dr. Dave Minner

We are in the process of renovating a number of our soccer fields that are in poor condition due to over use. The park supervisor has been renovating the fields by seeding, which takes the field out of use for at least an entire season. As we are already short of soccer fields, this is not the ideal remedy.

Based on a quote of \$2 per square yard for sod, I think we would be better off sodding the middle of the field and overseeding the edges. We have a watering system for the sod.

- Dave Zinnen

Woodstock Recreation Director
Woodstock, IL

Soccer field renovation can range from scattering some seed in hopes of a greener pasture, to a complete overhaul, where soil is removed and new grass is established. When you spend more money, you certainly expect to have a better field.

Please review the Q&A section from May 1999, "How Long Should I Wait," and the one from January 1999, "How much is too much... Round II."

I expect that there will be many more questions on how to deal with over-used fields. Your suggestion to sod the center of the field and overseed the edges is a good approach. It concentrates your resources where they are needed most.

Soccer fields usually have diamond-shaped wear patterns that are wide in the center and tapered at either goal. An average-size soccer field is approximately 82,500 square feet. The diamond-shaped traffic area will cover about 40,000 square feet. The most intense traffic areas, around the goals and at the center of the field, will cover approximately 20,000 square feet.

It makes perfectly good sense to develop separate plans for different areas of a field that have separate traffic intensities. Over-used fields should budget for annual sodding of chronic-problem areas that never seem to catch up after overseeding alone.

In some cases, the area that needs to be resodded each year may be as little as 5,000 square feet, and it's usually confined to the goal areas.

You should expect sodded areas to be ready in half the time it takes seeded areas to mature. Sodded areas also last approximately twice as long as seeded areas given the same amount of traffic.

Whatever your situation, you should expect sodded areas to be ready in half the time it takes seeded areas to mature. Sodded areas also last approximately twice as long as seeded areas given the same amount of traffic.

If we sod, how deep would you suggest we core underneath (the subsoil is in poor condition), and what would you suggest for a sub base?

I assume that when you refer to "coring underneath" you are asking

how to prepare your soil before laying sod. Areas where sod will be installed should first be cut out with a sod cutter, so that the resulting field surface will have a smooth transition between the newly laid sod and the remaining sections of the field.

Hollow coring, deep-tine Vertidrain, and Floyd McKay drill-and-fill are all options for putting some nice holes in the field before laying sod. The holes can be left open or filled with sand or other amendments.

Tilling the area before resodding will require substantially more work to get the surface smooth and firm. Tilling sand into the surface of a compacted field is often suggested. Review the March 1999 Q&A before you try this. Remember that you usually need approximately 80-percent sand in the final mixture to begin to get some benefit in terms of less compaction and better water movement.

Hollow coring and heavy topdressing may provide a more effective and economical approach to dealing with compaction than tilling sand into the surface. With 3/4-inch hollow tines on four-inch centers, you can remove 50 percent of a field in 18 passes. So crank up those coring and topdressing practices if you want to use sand to reduce compaction.



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