



Prepping soccer fields for fall

BY KEVIN VOS, CSFM

We begin getting ready for our fall season as soon as our spring season is over, which is at the end of June after four weekends of tournaments. The fall season kicks off the first weekend in August with a 4-day soccer tournament. That leaves us only a few weeks to get things ready.

The fields are thoroughly inspected for worn spots, low spots and anything else that needs to be changed or improved.

All fields are topdressed with 100 percent sand at approximately 1/8 inch thick, and low spots are leveled.

Deep tine aerification is done on the first of July after topdressing with 3/4-inch solid tines to a depth of 8-10 inches. Core aeration is also done over all fields in the middle part of August and again in late October/early November. During the remaining fall season, the high-use areas are aerified with solid tines approximately every 10-12 games or after a tournament.

Areas showing some wear and tear are slit seeded with Kentucky bluegrass at a rate of 2-3 pounds

per one thousand square feet going in two to three directions.

Seeding is done throughout the fall in high-use areas by slit seeding, divot mix or broadcasting. Either Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass is used, depending on the amount of wear and time of the year.

Depending on a mid-season soil test, the following applications are made for the remaining fall:

* Sand-based fields—equal parts of granular nitrogen and potassium applications are applied approximately every 14 to 21 days. Roots 1-2-3 nutrient package is applied every 21 days; Iron is applied as needed.

* Soil based fields—equal parts of granular nitrogen and potassium are applied at a rate of .5 pounds per one thousand square feet approximately the first week of July, a 20-0-20 slow release granular fertilizer is applied at a rate of one pound per one thousand



square feet approximately in mid-August, a 25-3-10 slow release granular fertilizer is applied at a rate of one pound per one thousand square feet approximately the end of September, and a 40-0-0 dormant granular fertilizer at one pound per one thousand square feet. Roots 1-2-3 nutrient package applied twice in the fall.

Fields are mowed a minimum of three times per week at 1 3/4 inch height. Fields are mowed every day of the week preceding and during tournaments.

The irrigation system is rechecked for proper distribution, soil moisture is continually monitored for either sand-based or soil-based fields. We try to apply 1-1 1/2 inches of water per week of rainfall and irrigation.

We follow IPM practices for pesticides, and applications are only made if needed.

Fields are then laid out according to the age level of the user group, and painted as needed with a growth regulator added to the paint.

Kevin Vos, CSFM, is athletic facilities manager, Muscatine Soccer Complex, Muscatine, IA.

ST

University favors slitting approach

Like many universities, Southeastern Missouri State University knows all about sports fields. The school maintains two practice football fields, two practice soccer fields, a football field-sized band practice field and a softball field. And Dennis Koeberl, the grounds crew foreman, is in charge of keeping these fields consistently safe and playable. That means Koeberl knows the in's and out's of overseeding.

For the past two years, Koeberl has relied on a Redexim Charterhouse overseeder called the Verti-Seed, and he couldn't be happier.

"Every time we used our old machine, it would end up tearing up the soil too much," he says. "The blades actually pulled up the Bermuda runners, making a mess of things. We couldn't afford to disturb the soil on those practice fields."

The problem was exacerbated by the fact

that the university wanted overseeding done on other areas around campus (for seeding fescues) including new intramural fields and highly visible common areas. "I was worried about the possibility of damage from that overseeder," Koeberl adds.

The school's new Verti-Seed seemed to answer their overseeding challenges. "This one slits open the sole, drops the seed right into the hole and then covers it up. We can put a lot more seed on in only two passes and it's a lot faster, and no other machine does this."

Koeberl notes that the old seeder required several passes to cover a given area with sufficient seed. "The Verti-Seed saves us a great deal of time, so we can spend it on other, more important jobs around campus."

-Jeff McGinnis

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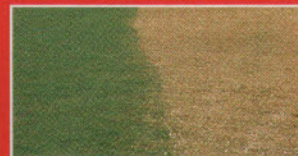
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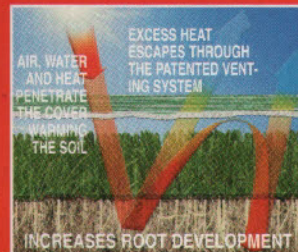
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Overseeding: a guide for professionals

BY JEFF MCGINNIS

It is a standard turf manager problem: how to achieve an established, healthy turf covering that is consistently dense on areas that get worn out by hard wear, drought, or winter damage. While differences do exist between regions, this guide was designed to assist most turf professionals with the basics of overseeding.

Overseeding today is a somewhat different process than it was in times past. Previously, a field might be shut down for 2 weeks while the procedure took place; today, given cost and scheduling pressures, the downtime is often limited

to only 1 day. After that, traffic is restricted for a day, and you wait 2 days before mowing again.

Along side winter overseeding in tropical regions we should consider summer maintenance of winter sports fields.

Soil testing to determine nutrient levels is usually the first step in preparing for overseeding, followed in some areas of the country by scarification (in at least two directions) to remove debris and smooth out minor irregularities. In places where there is a high percentage of *Poa annua* in the existing turf make-up, intense scarification at 3/4 in. can help to weaken its competitive edge, providing the newly seeded species with a fair start.

After scarification (in some states), many turf professionals suggest mowing in at least two directions and then removing the clippings. A higher percentage of *Poa annua* in the cover may necessitate very close mowing, as this will weaken the *Poa*; unfortunately, doing this regularly will actually help the *Poa*, since it's more resistant to close mowing than more desirable species. The lesson here is to perform scalping only when there is a high percentage of undesirable turfgrass species.

A key step: a series of aeration steps should be performed in succession. First, deep-time aeration should be done if possible (especially in compacted soil or areas with poor soil composition), using an aerator that produces a "heaving" action of the soil, creating fissures within the layers of soil where the tines enter it. Much of the topdressing mixture will flow down the holes produced, a desirable condition that permits rapid establishment and survival of the seedlings. If the moisture of the sand or soil prevents this flowing of the sand into the holes, then you may wish to dragmat and brush the sand into the newly created holes. (Phosphorus fertilizer may be applied before aerating, if the previous soil analysis determines it's needed.)

Following solid-tine aeration, the use of hollow-tines will aid sand incorporation, avoid layering and reduce compaction in the upper levels of the soil profile.

After initial aeration, topdress where needed with an appropriate sand and/or mixture. Choice of topdressing type depends on a laboratory analysis of existing surface samples. In most cases, a uniformly graded, medium/fine sand is preferred. Ideally the ground surface and the sand/topdressing should both be dry at time of application.

Using a dragmat and brush on the surface again will help achieve maximum filling of both solid-tine and hollow-tine holes. Additional applications of sand may help correct minor surface irregularities. Beyond this, aeration using a slitter (in five or six directions) will create numerous large drainage pores through the surface layers, improving root development and microbial activity, and enhancing filtration rates for efficient and uniform irrigation.

Once the above steps are done to satisfaction, the area should be lightly irrigated to ensure that sufficient moisture exists for rapid germination.

Finally, overseeding should be done lightly in at least two directions using

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a quality overseeder and certified seed of an appropriate mix. Fresh, quality seed must be used to ensure high purity and high germination capacities. Worn areas should be overseeded more heavily. Uniformly topdress with 1/8 inch of sand to cover the seed and improve moisture retention. Prevent access to the area by visitors after overseeding and topdressing, and lightly irrigate to enhance seed germination. During hot weather, frequent light irrigation may be required, though too much water should be avoided as it can disturb the seeds.

Of all the process factors that affect overseeding success, the most important criterion by far in determining germination is good seed to soil contact. Because of this, some methods of overseeding may be insufficient; for example, simply spreading the seeds over the surface of the ground gives them little hope of germinating in most cases. Methods that permit seeds to become established in the upper stratum of the soil, particularly approaches that involve burying the seed, are certainly preferred.

After establishment, the seedlings should be fertilized with nitrogen, though not before 2 weeks have passed; this will reduce the competitiveness of *Poa annua* and permit more uniform establishment. (If *Poa annua* is not present at seeding time, fertilizer can be applied before overseeding.) On high sand content constructions where black layer is present, avoid fertilizers that contain sulfur, since it can contribute to undesirable hydrogen sulfide formation and subsequent metallic sulfides.



Gradually reduce the frequency of irrigation to harden the new plants and encourage deeper rooting. Depending on the sport, initial mowing can begin when the seedlings are 2-3 inches in height. Be careful to remove no more than 25 percent of the leaf blade per cut and vary the direction of each cut. Cutting must be done as cleanly as possible to avoid damage or bruising to the young turfgrass.

Let's take a quick look at the two main types of overseeders available, keeping in mind that some machines are pedestrian models while others are tractor or truckster drawn.

Broadcast type machines are useful for random seed dispersal and so are more commonly employed where large areas must be covered. Drawbacks include the fact that these units often do not work well on undulating ground; seed is often left on the surface; and heavy post-seeding watering may be needed.

Drill seeders capable of actually burying the seed after putting it into the soil are state-of-the-art. This type of seeder cuts a thin slot through surface thatch and into the soil beneath the seed is then dropped into the slot and the slot closed again guaranteeing seed to soil contact for every seed, affording high germination rates.

For fine turf overseeding, look for machines that offer accurate metering even when using fine bents and close drill spacing. **ST**

Jeff McGinnis is a partner in the marketing communications firm Gaul Advertising. He can be reached at jmcginnis@gauladvertising.com.

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MULTISPREAD SYSTEM

Earth & Turf's Model 300

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UPGRADED SPREADER

Dakota Peat & Equipment changed its Turf Tender product line to make the equipment stronger. The Model 440 and Model 410 Turf Tenders feature yellow chromate hardware that replaces the standard hardware on last year's models as well as new cylinder shafts with black oxide coating rather than chrome.

Both models now feature spinner blades that can be adjusted in the field to modify the spread pattern to accommodate different types of sands.

Dakota Peat & Equipment/800-477-8415

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BROADCAST SPREADER

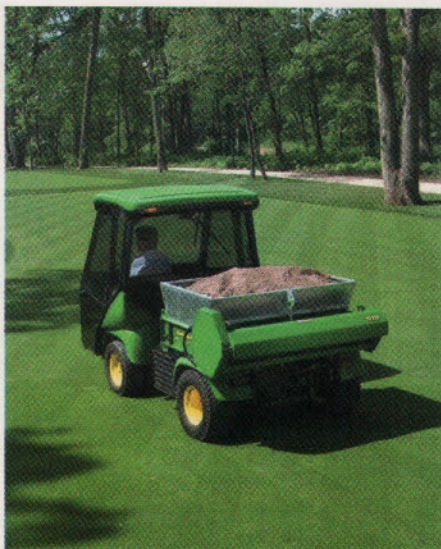
Featuring an all-steel frame, frontal "splash plate" and three available hopper sizes, Land Pride Broadcast Spreaders fit most landscape uses. The 14-gauge hopper is manufactured using a spin process for sturdy one-piece construction. The smooth, seamless inner wall allows material, ranging from fertilizer to seed and sand, to flow freely for complete "clean out."

Land Pride/785-823-3276
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