Another situation that I have encountered, which you see in a lot of park and recreation departments, is one in which the park supervisor or superintendent is responsible for the hiring of seasonal employees. In this instance they may become consumed with the idea of getting bodies in to do general park maintenance tasks instead of identifying the needs of each crew. As the sports turf manager this notion does not always help and makes things more difficult for you as user groups are knocking on the door to get out and use the fields. Let’s face it though we are not going to the moon, but we still need able individuals to get the work done and understand the goals of the crew throughout the season.

The most important thing you can do as the sports turf manager, if you are not doing so now, is to lobby for yourself and let your supervisors allow you to hire your own seasonal crew. This is important because you actually get to meet the individual instead of getting a description from your supervisor. You know what you are looking for in an employee and this allows you to directly relay to them what your expectations are as the sports turf manager. You are going to be able to share your passion and ask them specific questions that may or may not be asked by your supervisor, who is hiring for the whole department instead of for your crew.

By doing your own hiring it gives you more credibility with your supervisor(s) and takes some of the burden off of them, especially in the spring when everything seems to happen at once. I guarantee they will appreciate your helping them in this process, especially when you are going to have work with this individual closely for the next 7-8 months. This process is also a great training aide for if and when you step into a supervisory position.

Being that good help is hard to find, the next question you have to ask yourself is who do I hire? I personally struggled with this early in my beginnings a sports turf manager and eventually learned from my mistakes. I have found that former athletes often have a greater appreciation for what you are trying to put out for a product day after day. Even though they may not have played a sport on the field or fields you maintain but they understand the tendencies of athletes in respect to each sport.

For example, someone who may have played football but not baseball will have the understanding of why clay surfaces need to be maintained a certain way because of the footing action in pitching or running on a skinned area, just as a football player likes a tight turf-grass field for good firm footing to make quick cuts for a product day after day.

Ed Hall is superintendent of parks & grounds for the City of Bowie, MD.