

Elements of a successful maintenance schedule



>> KEVIN BEVENOUR ASKS, "Why don't more folks use these?"

A "A list, catalog, or inventory of details."
 "A list of times of reoccurring events or projected operations."
 "A timed plan for a procedure or project."
 "To plan or appoint."

These are the ways Webster describes the word "schedule." Some others say, "Life saver," "necessity," or "guide." Without several, I think my wife would have to be committed to the rubber room trying to keep track of me and my two young daughters. Whether you realize it or not, everyday is full of schedules. What time you set the alarm clock to get up each morning is the start of your daily schedule. The time you leave the house to get to work is another. Others are out of your control; try telling your body it's not time for that first cup of coffee just yet, or in my case, an ice cold Diet Coke. Some of us deal with multiple schedules for multiple things. I am fortunate to have schedules based on calendar years, school years, and budget years, not to mention employees, construction, trash pickups, recycling, tree care, and shrubbery. Landscape maintenance has seven different pruning schedules just in itself.

And then there are athletic field maintenance schedules, the topic of this article. I called upon some of my colleagues for help in gathering ideas. I generally asked the same questions to everyone and we led each other

Field Maintenance Schedule

Field		25-May	1-Jun	8-Jun	15-Jun	22-Jun	29-Jun	6-Jul	13-Jul	20-Jul	27-Jul	3-Aug	10-Jul
		MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF	MTWTF
Upper (M1)	R	H W	I F S		CCC B	CCC I	P H	I F		CCC I	B D	I F	
Pucillo (M2)	U	H AAA	I	F	B		F H	CCCCI	CCCCI	B D	CCCCI	F	
Baseball (M2)	U	H AAA	I F			B W	CCCCI	P H	I F		B D		I F

Key	A - Core aerate, top dress, seed, fert	P - Pest control application
	B - Biostimulat application	R - Irrigation by water reel
	C - CAMP	S - Seed
	D - Crabgrass control application	U - Automatic irrigation
	F - Granular Fertilizer application	W - Broadleaf weed control
	. - Holiday	M1 - Regular mowing once per week
	I - Field inspection	M2 - Regular mowing twice per week

into other related topics. We all came to the same conclusion on what a good maintenance schedule should do: give grass the best opportunity we can to grow. What do top managers do that's different from what I do? Who does the same things? How can I make

it work? When do I get it done? The goal for this article is two-fold. One, to provide some educational and informational subject matter in a lighthearted fashion, and two, for all of us to realize, at some point, we have been there and can relate to what others are faced with. Oh, and three, to have a little fun while I'm supposed to be working!

Do you HAVE a schedule?

Do you have a maintenance schedule for your athletic field(s)? Hopefully, everyone has something. Whether it be something simple on paper, a complex, multi-layered spreadsheet, or just thoughts locked away somewhere inside your big melon, have something.

Keep it simple; for example: AM—Keep boss out of trouble, PM—Keep self out of trouble. I have a hard time with this one. Use things that normally occur as a guide like holidays, beginning of seasons, or just months. I like using July 4th as a guide. This is where I look at things like grub control, fertilization applications, and monitoring of crabgrass germination and it's a good mid-point of the year to take inventory of where you are on your maintenance schedule.

Keep records. Remembering what you did last year is a great guide for the next year, but you have to write it down and retain the data. Those of us who have been at this for a long number of

years have the philosophy that we just "know" when things need done, but for my own benefit I make sure there's something written somewhere, just in case. We are currently in the middle of the information age and there are many people, especially supervisors, who just love to have information at their finger tips. Computers are in every office. We all have the important person who sits behind the desk and needs to know what's going on and when questions arise, may come to you for the answer. If you have it, you just succeeded in following the first schedule presented to you.

No "to-do" lists

Don't get caught up in blindly following your plan. Things beyond your control will inevitably happen. When I asked my peer group to provide the biggest reason a schedule is not followed, the answer was unanimous. I'm sure everyone has it by now, that's right: Weather. It can make us look good and it can make us look really bad. (You'll note there are no pictures of campus with this article.)

I had my schedules changed frequently in the past couple of months for this very reason. Field maintenance was halted when the call came in that our day care director was losing her kids in the grass around the playground because it was so high. Don't worry, all the kids were saved. Things such as field use, vacations, campus

70% INFLOW RATE

WATER MUST ENTER TO EVER EXIT!






💧 7 to 25 times higher inflow rate than most other systems
💧 Capable of withstanding over 11,000lbs/ft²



800.223.7015

hydraway.net

events, and simple timing are other distractions. Hurrah, we just made the post-season; congratulations, 2 more weeks of practice and by the way, we're going to host the first round. Remembering your schedule is only a guide will hopefully save you some unmerited stress.

What should you consider when making your schedule? The two things you need to think about before you get started are budget and manpower. Once again, these were the two issues that everyone talked about. You can have the best intentions and have a program that will take your fields to the next level, but you need the backing to get it accomplished. "Nothing is written in pen without a budget number," was one of the statements I heard. I can't disagree. Raising the amount of nitrogen through increasing applications is a great idea, but do you have the person available to do it?

Another issue to consider is actual field

use. The following are some questions you need to answer: Who uses the field—men, women, boys, girls, small kids? Males tend to be more aggressive turf destroyers than females. What is the field used for, baseball, soccer, hockey, band, multi-sport? Each sport carries its own challenges; crease areas, mid-field, repetitive plays. What is the level of play; professional, NCAA, intramural, club, recreation? Ranking your field priority helps to adjust the maintenance level each may receive. In a school setting, is it in season or non-traditional; game field or practice field? How often is the field used; every day, weekly, seasonally? Am I the only one whose baseball season starts January 15? What are the expectations placed upon you by the hierarchy of your organization?

In the end, we all came to the same conclusion: we do what works for us. What works for Dan or Jim, may not for me or Jerry or Mike. Plan your work, work your

plan. Sure, we'd like to do more and will push ourselves to give the athletes that use our fields the best playing surface we can with what we have. We simply won't settle. We've tried, failed, succeeded, and learned.

I wish there was a magic formula or some voodoo spell to cast, everyone does. It simply comes down to hard work and caring about the final product. Find what works for you and make yours a Maintenance Schedule of a Top Manager. ■

Kevin Bevenour is grounds supervisor for Millersville University, Millersville, PA.



Basic sample maintenance schedule

Brooks Field (field hockey, club & intramurals)

Spring:

Deep aeration (Earthquake)
Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed

Summer:

Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application as necessary
Crabgrass control as needed
Irrigation to bring turf out of dormancy before start of use

Fall:

Fertilizer application
Overseed during use
Irrigate as necessary
Deep aeration

Winter:

Core aerate as necessary
Fertilizer application

Baseball

Spring:

Deep tine core aeration
Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Biostimulant application
Irrigate as necessary

Summer:

Irrigate
Fertilizer application
Crabgrass control as needed

Fall:

Irrigate as needed
Topdress as needed
Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application
Seed

Winter:

Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application

Softball

Spring:

Deep aeration (Earthquake)
Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Biostimulant application

Summer:

Fertilizer application
Crabgrass control as needed

Fall:

Topdress as necessary
Seed
Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application
Deep aeration (Earthquake)

Winter:

Fertilizer application

Stadium Practice Field

Spring:

Topdress as necessary
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Seed

Deep aeration (Earthquake)

Summer:

Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application
Crabgrass control as needed
Irrigate to bring turf out of dormancy before use
Seed

Fall:

Irrigate as needed
Fertilizer application
Biostimulant application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Seed

Winter:

Topdress as necessary
Fertilizer application

Spoils Field (Multi-purpose)

Spring:

Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed

Summer:

Fertilizer application
Crabgrass control as needed

Fall:

Seed
Fertilizer application

Winter:

Core aerate
Seed
Fertilizer application

Pucillo

Spring:

Deep tine core aeration
Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Biostimulant application
Irrigate as necessary

Summer:

Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed

Biostimulant application

Crabgrass control as needed
Irrigate as necessary

Fall:

Seed
Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Biostimulant application
Irrigate as necessary

Winter:

Fertilizer application
Broadleaf weed control as needed
Biostimulant application
Gypsum application
Deep tine core aeration
Topdress as necessary