

# From the Sidelines



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## Perfecting infield skins an art and science

**T**HE REPORT beginning on page 8 this month is an attempt to provide you with recommendations for creating the best infield skin surface possible. One expert told me at the STMA Conference in January, “There’s no class offered on infield skins,” and others agreed that there’s no real standard for infield mixes either, beyond a basic one from the American Society for Testing and Materials.

We asked a number of respected professionals in the industry to answer these questions: What should the standard for infield mix be? What adjustments from your standard can be made for skins being managed on low budgets? What questions should readers ask of their material suppliers to help get the best results?

Several of our experts prefaced their responses with some general comments that I thought worthy of sharing.

Norm Hummel, PhD, a soils consultant and test lab owner, has more than 35 years in the industry. He wrote, “Having served on the ASTM committee that wrote the current guidelines for infields, I can tell you that it can be quite contentious. Anything you write is likely to stir up a hornet’s nest . . . I have been testing infield mixes for years; hundreds from around the country. Through tying in my testing experience with personal observations in the field as well as feedback from end users, I have come up with these guidelines.”

Dave Dwizlewski, a consultant with Gail Materials, Corona, CA, wrote, “I have been for years talking about specific particle size distribution for sand, silt and clay. I first refereed that the differences between silt plus clay should not exceed 10% and I was saying this over 10 years ago. I believe Grant McKnight of Natural Sand coined the phrase silt to clay ratio which you hear about quite often . . . it’s a better way to describe the idea than what I stated at a 10% difference. When I worked as a consultant at Soil & Plant Lab we used to consult for the local horse race tracks where similar requirements, primarily for sand distribution, were studied. Silt plus clay was required but at lower percentages for race tracks; however the same variance in particles was also true as it is with infield mixes. The true grandfather about a lot of this philosophy is Oris A Matkin, the founder of Soil & Plant Lab.”

And finally, from Jim Hermann, CSFM, an athletic field consultant from New Jersey: “Infields are like Christmas trees; they all look good from the road.”

I trust reading what the experts have to say about infield skin mixes will aid you in improving your fields.

### Facebook

Green Media, publisher of this and other magazines in the Green Industry, including *Arbor Age*, *Landscape and Irrigation*, and *Outdoor Power Equipment* recently introduced GreenMediaMags, the official Green Media Facebook page. On the new fan page, which is regularly updated by our staff, you can find the latest Green Industry news, content, photos and commentary. Topics will cover all aspects of the Green Industry. You can interact with our editorial staff, as well as other professionals from throughout the Green Industry. The fan page is a great way to provide feedback, share ideas, and follow industry trends. Simply “Like” our Facebook page to start interacting with the Green Media community. Search for the GreenMediaMags page from your profile, or go directly to the following link: [www.Facebook.com/GreenMediaMags](http://www.Facebook.com/GreenMediaMags) and become a “fan.”

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