



Creative management and a lucky window helped Ridgewood's native soil field survive the '95 drought.
Photo courtesy: Bob Buono.

In late fall of 1994, the field was core aerated in two directions, overseeded with a 50-50 mixture of turf-type tall fescue and perennial ryegrass, topdressed with 3/8-screen topsoil, and overlaid with a light layer of sphagnum peat moss, spreading 40 four-cubic-foot bales.

Buono says, "We leave the cores on the field after aeration so the native soil, topsoil and peat combine to gradually improve the soil profile.

"Crabgrass is a perpetual invader. We make an early March application of pendimethalin combined with a 0-0-7 fertilizer. That's followed with a second treatment the first week of April in combination with a 19-3-7 fertilizer with a 50 percent sulfur coated urea (SCU) nitrogen source. In conjunction with the second treatment in 1995, we sodded the worn out areas along the sidelines with grade-A bluegrass sod and spot treated for fungus and broadleaf weeds."

Buono used a granular insecticide and fertilizer combination with a 23-3-10, 40 percent SCU Poly formula in May of 1995. A second spot treatment for fungus and broadleaf weeds was made during May.

The field is "on display" for graduation in June. Buono says, "Ten days prior to commencement, we applied a fertilizer product with 100 percent SCU and five percent iron. The field was in top shape for the graduation ceremony. We aerated and overseeded with our 50-50 seed mix again at the end of June.

"Everything was looking great when the '95 drought hit. Luckily it coincided with our only window of limited field use. We applied a slow release fertilizer during July and August and spot treated broadleaf weeds with an amine herbicide. We also applied granular Merit as a preventative measure against grubs. We aerated the entire field and sidelines."

Buono is a licensed pesticide applicator and handles all of the pesticide applications.

He follows IPM practices, acting immediately when field-damaging activity becomes apparent.

The results of the tough summer kept him hopping in August. Buono says, "I applied Dylux to control grub activity in a few confined spots, boom sprayed the entire field with a fungicide to combat leaf spot, and spot treated with Acclaim to wipe out the crabgrass that appeared in some of the hottest, driest areas. We aerated, overseeded and topdressed the grub-damaged areas."

As the drought broke and temperatures eased up a bit in the fall, Buono was able to resume watering. He says, "We applied our standard fall fertilizer, aerated the entire field and sidelines, and sodded the worn areas along both sidelines with grade-A bluegrass sod. We overseeded the worn areas with turf-type tall fescue, topdressed with topsoil and added a light layer of peat moss on top."

Crews groom the football field every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, alternating direction with each mowing. The three-inch mowing height drops down to 2 1/2 inches in the pre-game mowing for football and lacrosse.

Buono says, "In the spring of '95 we purchased a new Jacobsen HR 5111 12-foot hydrostatic-deck diesel mower from Wilfred McDonald Equipment in Lyndhurst, NJ. It's been a labor-saving, cost-effective investment, and we've received excellent support from our supplier.

"Varsity games are played on Saturday. During the playing season, the field is lined using our Titan paint liner following the Friday mowing. Other equipment in our small but effective arsenal includes a Model 1920 Ford tractor with a tow-behind aerator, tow-behind 100-gallon sprayer, and a three-point spreader. Two 25-gallon electric tanks are mounted on our utility cart for spot spraying. We've designated one tank for selective control products, the other for non-selective controls."

Like everyone else in this industry, Buono must be creative in stretching the budget to bring heavy-use and high-visibility areas into top condition without slighting other segments of the property.

He says, "It's a continual juggling act, but the results are gratifying. What better 'after' could I have than STMA's Football Field of the Year Award?" □

Bob Tracinski is manager of public relations for the John Deere Company in Raleigh, NC, and public relations co-chair for the national Sports Turf Managers Association.

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TESTING MOTHER NATURE

By Don Arenberg

Since my first article appeared in the January 1996 *sportsTURF*, many readers have contacted me, requesting information on the following.

• Readers had heard that natural materials would produce better results than synthetic fertilizers, but they had not observed any recognizable benefits from organics. Readers wanted to know why.

• Most readers requested a list of natural products that will provide definite visual benefits and wanted an opportunity to test the products. They wanted to know exactly what superior results they can expect from natural products that they cannot obtain from synthetics.

Quick Answers

Research has discovered that the

primary key to nature's success in growing healthy plants comes from plant manures and the biological processes they promote within the soil. Most newer products today are basically plant manures designed to imitate the benefits of nature and her necessary total reactions. I have not tested all products and invite manufacturers to contact me if they're interested. The following companies' products have been tested and have provided many visible benefits: Pro's Choice, Inc.; Grounds Management Consultants, Inc.; Organic Systems International, Inc.; and Biogenesis, Inc. (a division of Agro Care).

Readers, for their tests, can try products from one of those companies or from any others. Often products are packaged in smaller-size containers, so they can be tested inexpensively on small areas.

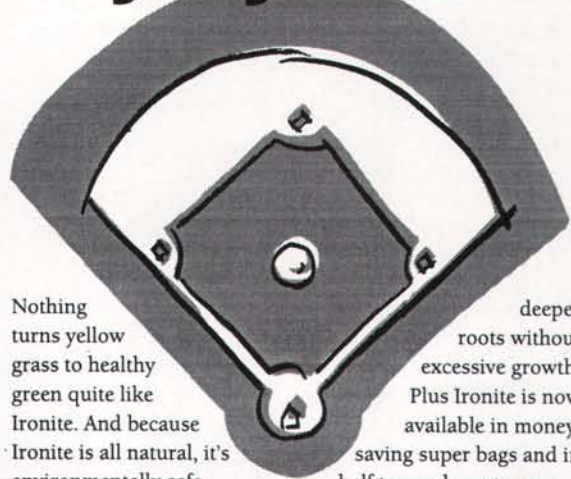
Visual results will be most noticeable when products are applied during the active growing season, May through October. It is wise to begin using natural products now, so some results can be observed before autumn arrives.

Because soils vary from region to region, natural products will perform differently from one turf area to another. Professionals should always test products on their own sites, under their particular conditions, before determining their next steps: short- and long-term programs.

Benefits To Turfgrass

Readers who set up comparison test areas — one for synthetics and another for organics — can look for the following visible reactions to turfgrass in the organic plot.

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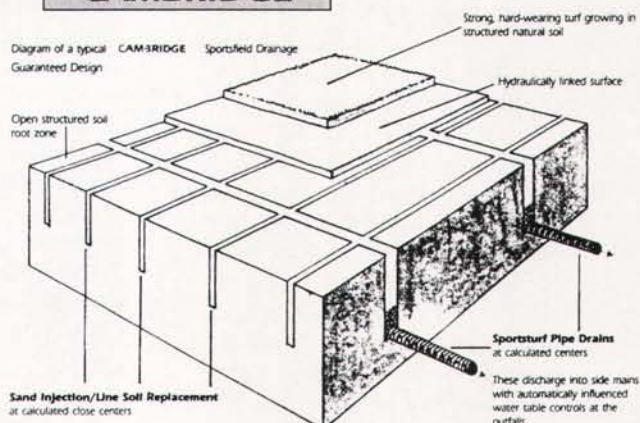
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Aggressive root growth. There should be an increase in root numbers (mass), size (thickness) and depth.

Massive, aggressive rhizome and stolon growth. The more of these structures, the denser the population of pure grass. They will restrict the growth of other plants (weeds) while eliminating bare soil and thin areas.

Deep green, attractive leaf blade color. This indicates healthy plant reactions.

Development of dense, strong, thick cell walls. This is critical in developing natural plant immunity and defense systems.

Slower leaf blade growth after grass established. The result is stronger plants, requiring less water, fertilizer, etc.

Natural Benefits to Soil

If organics prove more successful than synthetics on test plots, the following benefits should be observable in the soil.

Reduced soil toxicities. This is the main way most older turf stands can be improved.

Salts from applications of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and ice-melting compounds accumulate in compacted soils that drain slowly. High salt levels will kill actively feeding grass roots and inhibit essential grass reactions and efficient water utilization (requiring more watering, both frequency and

quantities). Salts also kill essential soil microbes, so beneficial soil reactions cease. The soil becomes more compact, and toxic gases (methane, carbon monoxide) accumulate.

Salt concentrations can be measured with salt meters, and damaging effects can be observed visually: (1) root tips turning brown and dying; (2) grass roots growing within the top 1/4 to 1/2 inch of the soil or on the soil surface; (3) grass showing signs of yellowing and thinning. Also, compacted soils and accumulations of non-decomposing surface-mat and thatch are results of salt damage.

Certain plant manures and other natural compounds contain catalytic enzymes (produced from a symbiotic relationship between a virus and a bacteria) that convert harmful salts into beneficial compounds. Noticeable effects of salt levels becoming lower and less toxic include the following: (1) grass roots begin to grow more deeply and massively into the soil; (2) turf density and color improve; (3) soil puddling becomes less, as the soil shows signs of loosening with better penetration of water, air, nutrients and grass roots; (4) dead plant matter (mat and thatch) accumulations begin to decompose, forming essential organic soil matter.

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actions on compacted soils become obvious. A more "crumbly" texture is noticed as the soil becomes more "friable." "Soil aggregates" develop creating more "pore space," improving the flow of water, air and nutrients, and encouraging more growth of microbes. Deeper and more numerous grass root growths are quickly noticed.

Grass roots, rhizomes, and stolons begin to grow more profusely, deeper, appearing very white in color and aggressively developing many new shoots. As the soil conditions improve, root depth may reach six to 12 inches within a year or two after treatment begins.

As each minor improvement is accomplished, soil reactions beneficial to a desired plant are multiplied. All improvements will be visible. Not only will the grass become denser and greener, with deeper roots and more massive rhizomes and stolons, but the plant's ability to ward off adversities and heal from wounds will improve. The plant will exhibit fewer poor responses occurring from predator attacks and adversities. □

Donald J. Arenberg is a turfgrass agronomist and naturalist with Consulting Agronomists, Inc., Northbrook, IL 60065-2113; phone (708) 272-8090, fax (708) 455-6902.

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With its artificial surface replaced, Iowa State University's football stadium enjoys the look and feel of all natural turf. Photos courtesy: Mike Andresen.

Colorado Chapter: The Colorado Chapter's next meeting will be held on August 15 at Colorado State University's Hughes Stadium in Fort Collins, CO. The meeting will concentrate on football and soccer field management. Sonny Lubick, CSTMA member and head coach of CSU football, will be the keynote speaker at this meeting.

For information on the Colorado Chapter or upcoming events, call the 24-Hour CSTMA Chapter Hotline/FAX: (303) 438-9645 and leave a message, or contact: Troy Smith, Denver Broncos, at (303) 649-9000.

Florida Chapter #1: The Florida Chapter will assist with the STMA booth at the Florida Turfgrass Association show to be held August 24 and 25 at the Tampa Convention Center in Tampa, FL.

The Florida Chapter also will participate in the "Turf Rodeo" on August 29 held in conjunction with the Florida Parks and Recreation Association (FPRA) activities at the Rolling Hills Country Club in Ft. Lauderdale. Crews will showcase their skills. Join in the fun. It's a great opportunity for networking.

For more information on these events, the Florida Chapter, and other pending events, contact: John Mascaro (305) 938-7477.

Southern California Chapter: The Southern California Chapter's next meeting is planned for August 31 at the Epicenter Stadium in Rancho Cucamonga. Activities include a stadium tour, a dinner and camaraderie break, and the opportunity to attend the game between the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes ball team and a worthy opponent.

The Southern California Chapter will "do it again," adopting for its 1996 field renovation project the combination field-hockey/soccer/football field of Rancho



In the final stages of its conversion, sod is laid on Jack Trice Field.

Buena Vista High School in Vista, CA, on October 25 and 26. The chapter will meet at the school on October 25. The group will finalize the renovation plan, then move outdoors for hands-on demonstrations of the tasks that will be involved. Then, on October 26, the volunteers will converge on the field for the renovation work day. Plan now to join in this hands-on experience of learning and giving, one more example of the Southern California Chapter's concentration on demonstrating the STMA focus on better and safer sports turf areas.

For information on these events, the Southern California Chapter and other upcoming activities, contact: Chris Bunnell at (619) 432-2421.

Minnesota Chapter: The Minnesota Chapter is planning a Fall Workshop to be held in mid-September. Further details will be announced soon.

For information on the Minnesota Chapter or upcoming activities, contact: Brian Deyak at (612) 255-7223.

Midwest Chapter: The Midwest Chapter's next meeting will be held on September 11 at the Inwood Recreation Center of the Joliet Park District in Joliet, IL. The meeting will focus on integrated pest management techniques, checking out the latest techniques and products available to keep insect and disease problems under control. This program will discuss the difference between natural and chemical control methods. A top group of turf management professionals will lead the discussion. The meeting also will include a tour of the Inwood Center complex.

For more information on the Midwest Chapter or upcoming events, call: The Chapter Hotline (847) 439-4727.

STMA'S Rug to Turf Review

Cool air, low humidity and bright skies greeted the **Iowa STMA** chapter members who converged on Iowa State University's Cyclone Stadium-Jack Trice Field in Ames, IA. Though July 9 was the date, football weather and a football focus were the highlights of the day.



The foundation for Jack Trice's new turf is prepared.

They'd pulled the rug on Jack Trice Field this spring, as yet another college football field was converted to natural turf.

Registration opened at 8:30, giving attendees time to network over coffee — and compare notes on meeting the challenges of athletic field preparation and maintenance.

The meeting opened in a VIP section of Cyclone Stadium as Mike Andresen, ISU athletic turf manager, welcomed attendees to his new turf, and ISTMA President Rick Simpson, of South Tama Schools, added his own words of greeting.

Bob Soddors of Story Construction in Ames — whose company had served as construction manager for the renovation project from design to finish — filled in the details of the mechanics, coordination and quality control segments of the project. Soddors gave an in-depth discussion on the bidding process, costs and scheduling. The architectural firm HOK, Inc., designed the field and oversaw its construction. Denver-based RBI, Inc., was the surface installer. Dave Minner, Nick Christians, John Newton and "the entire ISU community" helped put it all together.

Soddors noted that attendance at weekly coordination meetings was mandatory for all contractors and necessary with such a complex project.

Dave Minner, of the ISU Horticulture Department, filled in details of the project's materials selection, sampling and testing, and of setting the "margins of acceptability." He also covered the characteristics of the sub-surface drainage system, noting the cost savings of being able to "tie into" the perimeter drainage already in place to serve the artificial turf field.

Coordination was vital, from the start in early March of "tearing out" the old surface and underlying materials, through preparing the sub-grade and underground drainage network; installing the 12-station irrigation system; and finding, testing, mixing and installing the 12-inch layer of 95 percent sand, five percent peat that would become the rootzone mix, to wrapping the installation of the big roll sod in early May.

Andresen picked up the story with a focus on the project-driven changes in maintenance. Making the move from artificial to natural turf requires different equipment, products and staffing. Andresen noted that good communication is key, with the contractors and within the many involved departments at ISU.

Andresen addressed the steps taken to "baby" the new sod, noting the development of roots into the sand-based medium from a one-inch root depth on May 12, to the early July five- to six-inch sand-holding depth. He was making his own move from a baseball field built on an old landfill to a state-of-the-art, sand-based football field during its grow-in process and expressed his appreciation for the advice and support he received from other STMA members. Freely shared information is key to advancing this profession.

Andresen started a daily journal on April 4, the day he joined the ISU staff. It noted weather details, field maintenance procedures, and field progress. He shared this journal with attendees.

Andresen and Sodders then shifted attention to the ISU football practice

facilities, still in a state of recovery following late-spring flooding. Construction is yet to begin on the new practice fields. Andresen noted that a good practice facility helps keep practices off the game field and credits the ISU Athletic Department for respecting the "special status" of Jack Trice Field, even when practice fields are less than ideal.

STMA Executive Director Steve Trusty spread the news from headquarters on STMA, the chapter-national connection, and updates on plans for the Annual Conference to be held in Colorado Springs, January 15-19, 1997.

The group moved out on the field for an up-close inspection and tour. They then gathered for a hearty lunch, grilled to perfection by Michael Grooms. These activities provided more opportunities for the questions and answers and idea sharing that marked the spirit of the meeting.

For more information on the Iowa Chapter or upcoming activities, contact: Lori Westrum at The Turf Office at (515) 232-8222 (phone) or (515) 232-8228 (fax).

STMA Chapters on the Grow

Kansas: The newly forming Kansas Chapter has adopted a name: The Great Plains Chapter. It is meeting regularly on the last Wednesday of each month. The August 28 meeting will be held at Lawrence-Dumont Stadium. It begins at 4:00 p.m. and will last approximately two hours.

A Mid-September Seminar is in the planning stages. The same seminar format will be repeated during the designated week at different sites across the state — starting in east Kansas and then moving on to central and west Kansas locations.

For more information on the monthly meetings, the September Seminars, or the chapter, contact: Mark Schimming of Wichita Baseball, Inc. at (316) 292-2907, extension 205.

Arizona: For information on the newly forming Sports Turf Managers Association of Arizona, on upcoming events or to find out how you can get involved, contact: Bill Murphy, City of Scottsdale Parks and Recreation Department, at (602) 994-7954. □

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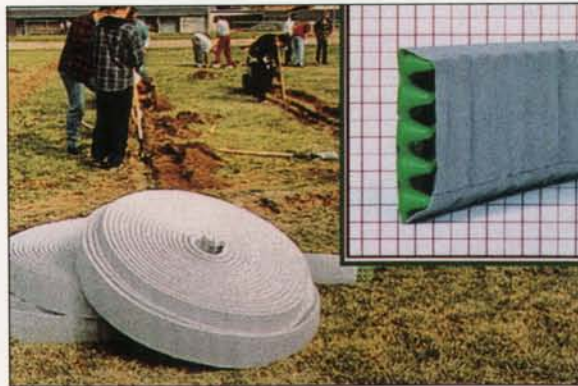
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"TerraFlow is the total solution for turf saturation problems. Carefully engineered and laboratory-tested, it provides years of assured drainage performance. Lightweight prefabricated components make it the easiest system to install, and its compactness minimizes excavation and turf disruption. TerraFlow resists clogging and collapse for long maintenance-free service, supported by over a decade of customer satisfaction and field-proven performance."

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ROOKIES

SOIL REINFORCEMENT

Akzo Nobel Geosynthetic's Enkaturf system offers a long-term, low maintenance solution to chronic problems of compaction and water damage to high-traffic turf. Enkamat is a tough, flexible soil-reinforcement matting made from nylon monofilaments fused at their intersection. Enkamat, soil and turf are combined in a specific manner to provide a vigorous, structurally superior turf surface where 90 percent of this three-dimensional structure is open space.

In the Enkaturf system, grass roots grow into and through the Enkamat, which provides a permanent fibrous matting that gives sod structural strength. Enkamat produces an aerifying effect that reduces compaction and promotes the growth of each individual grass plant.

AKZO INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS CO.

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NATURAL FIELD ABSORBENT

Dri•Zorb 3® is a dry, free-flowing granular corncob material that can be applied easily by spreader or by hand to soggy sports fields, parks and playgrounds. Its proven 442 percent water absorbency won't break down under playing conditions. It contains no silica, and there is no build-up to be concerned with because Dri•Zorb is 100 percent biodegradable.

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CLEAT CLEANERS

Used in the World Series and Major League Baseball's All-Star games as well as community and sandlot softball programs, this cleat cleaner is made of precision-molded rubber and is virtually indestructible. Designed to remove mud and caked-in dirt from cleat, spike and athletic shoes, the product can reduce injuries, improve footing and create greater mobility.

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DRAIN KIT

Turf-Tec International and Precision Small Engine Co. have jointly developed a brand-new device for eliminating small drainage problems on golf greens and other turfgrass areas.

Using water from any irrigation system, the Turf-Tec Drain-Jet Kit® makes a clean vertical hole, 32 inches deep and three inches in diameter, by dissolving and then exhausting the soil through a hose to a non-use area. The clean hole is filled with gravel or coarse sand, and after replacing a plug of grass on greens, it is ready for play.

Other areas, such as tees, fairways and edges of golf cart paths, can be drained easily. Sand traps and bunkers can be drained without contamination of the sand.

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