

The Great Lawn in Central Park, New York City

Additional Maintenance Details

Aeration:

Core aerate twice in spring, twice in fall.

Overseeding:

- All turf areas are overseeded following fall aeration.
- Entrances to Great Lawn and Ball field backstop area are overseeded every 10 to 14 days.
- Other high traffic areas are overseeded as needed throughout growing season.

Irrigation:

- The Great Lawn is irrigated every other day from July through September, with adjustments for natural precipitation.
- Irrigate as needed for the remainder of the year.

Pest Control:

- Apply Pre-emergent in mid-March for annual grassy weed control.

Monitor conditions daily:

- Hand pull any broadleaf weeds as they appear; spot treat if necessary.
- If signs of disease activity occur, pull samples for analysis.
- Monitor grub activity.
- Identify any other destructive insects.
- For all pests: use chemical controls only if all other methods fail to achieve acceptable results.

Infield:

- In February or March, before spring season begins and in October or November, when fall season ends:
- Re-edge ballfields.
- Bring in additional clay and repair batting and pitching areas and any other damaged areas.

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- RUSSELL FREDERICKS

and the nearly constant heavy use. Fertilization is based on the results of monthly soil tests and biweekly tissue tests from late March into November.

A granular combination of preemergent and fertilizer is applied in mid-March. A granular organic fertilizer is the base of the program to build up microbial activity in the soil profile, to eliminate burn potential in the summer months and to provide a gradual release of nutrients for consistent growth and color. The first application of the 8-3-5 organic fertilizer is made in mid-April at a rate of one-half pound of nitrogen (N) per 1,000 square feet. Applications continue at this rate every four weeks into November. The

last application of the season is at the full pound rate. This is augmented by a continually fine-tuned fertigation program. Iron, a micronutrient "package" and a 20-3-3 fertilizer are the basic components and are used at minimal rates.

Separate granular applications of magnesium and calcium are made as needed. In 1999, one application of magnesium was made in the spring and another in the fall. Lime or a high calcium-based product will be applied depending on nutrient level fluctuations and pH levels.

While potassium levels often are monitored closely as a key factor

affecting wear, stress and heat tolerance, Fredericks has focused more closely on the calcium and magnesium levels. He has found that the calcium level especially is as important, or even more important, in the turf's ability to take the wear on a sand-based field.

Mowing and Grooming

The turf crew mows the majority of open turf, for the fields and lawn area, twice a week with a 16-foot rotary mower to maintain a height of 2-1/2 inches. Zone gardeners mow the hard to reach sections along fence lines and around shrubs and trees with 21-inch or 48-inch walk-behind mowers. They follow up with string trimmers as needed. Clippings remain on the turf.

Infield grooming varies per field based on condition and use schedules.

Zone gardener Joaquim Pereira handles the majority of the field grooming, including general grooming using the multiple attachments of a ride-on field rake and the repair of depressions or wet spots.

Zone gardeners also wet down



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To keep fields in top condition, only passive recreation and low-impact sports are allowed.



Russell Fredericks (left), turf program manager of Central Park's Great lawn, accepts the Field of the Year award from past STMA President Steve Guise.

the infields, set the pitching rubber, repair the home-plate area and stripe the foul lines.

Coordinating all this—takes all the wide-ranging experience Fredericks has accumulated. He earned his BS degree from Rutgers Cook College in 1991 with a major in environmental planning and a minor in plant science. He has managed his own lawn/landscape maintenance company and worked for a corporate maintenance company; a design/build company with a corporate and estate lawn/landscape maintenance division; and as an assistant golf course superintendent for American Golf in their contractual maintenance agreement with the City of New York. This background has equipped him for his position with the Conservancy.

Fredericks says, "The passion, enthusiasm and energy for what we do, shared by all those within the Central Park Conservancy, is the main reason this is a success. Everyone I work with takes great pride in the park and in their role in making and keeping it a beautiful, user-friendly place for the people of New York and for visitors from all over the world. No aspect of the maintenance program is equal to the dedication and enthusiasm of the organization that makes this sort of commitment to excellence." ■

Bob Tracinski is the business communications manager for the John Deere Worldwide Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division headquartered in Raleigh, N.C. He serves as public relations co-chair for the national Sports Turf Managers Association.

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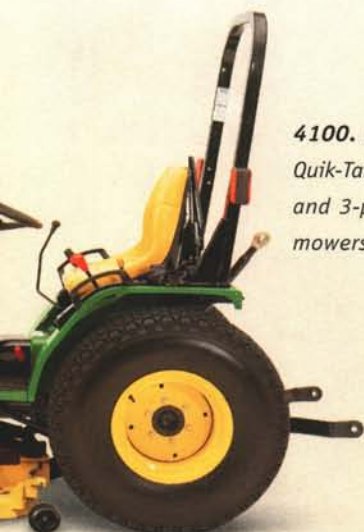
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Nothing Runs Like A Deere

Maintenance Tactics for High Traffic Areas

by Abby McNeal

With the participation in sports continuing to increase at a rapid rate, existing fields receive more traffic than ever before. While no single tactic will answer the needs of turf in all situations, a combination of tactics will help to combat the damage and stress that excessive traffic causes. Developing a solid repertoire of maintenance tactics is essential for maintaining safe and aesthetic playing fields.

The tactics offered here can be used at all levels, from municipalities to professional sports venues. Some of the tactics require an investment of time, while others require an investment of money. Ultimately, it is up to the turf manager to identify the combination of tactics that work best for the situation.

Tactic 1: Field Layout

Where space permits, alternating the direction of the fields from one season to another is effective in shifting the wear pattern of the field. This tactic is most effective when you can rotate the field 90 degrees, such as going from an east-west orientation to a north-south orientation. Even rotating the field as little as 45 degrees can provide some relief. Changing the field orientation also allows highly stressed areas, such as goal mouths on soccer fields, a chance to recover for a longer period.

If there is not enough space to rotate the playing field, consider adjusting the width of the field. Check with the clubs using the field to verify that their rules allow for a variation in field sizes before adjusting the width. Adjusting the width changes the pattern of sideline wear from spectators, players and sideline judges.

Tactic 2: Scheduling

Getting involved in the scheduling is an important tactic in handling high traffic areas. The schedule dictates the amount of wear and damage to the turf, as well as when maintenance tasks can be performed. The turf manager acts as a voice for the field in making it known what level of traffic the field will tolerate.

In establishing a schedule consider:

- Alternating the age level of the users. If possible, alternate between adult teams and youth teams on the same field.
- Alternating the division level team using the fields. If possible, rotate competitive users and recreation league users.
- Non-field related events and how they play a part in the wear. Don't schedule a concert right before a long home stand.
- For facilities with multiple playing fields, try to incorporate a weekly rest for one field (i.e., one field a week is not being played on).
- Establishing cancellation rules and frost policies prior to the season starting will protect the field from unnecessary injury and facilitate the relationship with the teams. Ultimately, through working with the scheduler and the users, a better understanding of field expectations can be gained by all parties.

Tactic 3: Crumb Rubber

Crumb rubber, recycled tire materials that are ground down into a smaller particle size, is gaining popularity in helping turf managers maintain turf cover in difficult areas. Topdress the crumb rubber into areas where a mature stand of turf has been established, such as goal mouths, bench areas and sidelines, prior to damage occurring. The crumb rubber acts to protect the crown of the plant from damage, allowing the turf to recover more quickly. When applying crumb rubber, follow the product's directions and use multiple applications to build up a cushion for the turf.

One word of caution: This material retains heat and could result in drought stress.

continued on page 20



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Tactic 4: Field Protection

Field covers enable the turf to start growing before it would normally come out of dormancy by creating optimal growing conditions. This tactic is particularly helpful when the fields are needed for play prior to the growing season.

For non-sport events on the field, a variety of flooring and protection products are available. Evaluate all the available options, keeping in mind the following:

- Amount of time material will be on the field surface
- Amount of traffic caused by the event
- Staging and/or speaker stand weight
- Maintenance impacts such as fungicide use and fertility schedule and any preventative chemical applications that may be necessary

Applying covers to worn or thin areas also helps establish the turf quicker. Smaller tarps work well for goal mouths, team bench areas, and center of the field or other small areas where the turf is worn or thin.

Before applying the cover, aerify, over-seed, topdress with the appropriate material and water the area sufficiently. While the cover is on the turf, monitor the temperatures above and below the cover to prevent possible burn

injury resulting from high temperatures. Generally, the temperatures should be no higher than 85 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the canopy below the cover. Remove the cover during periods of high heat and allow airflow to keep the temperatures in a safe range. Schedule enough time to "harden off" the younger turf plants before exposing them to traffic and cold temperatures. This process should be started at least two weeks prior to the first use of the field.

Sideline protection is important when you have football or soccer fields. Whether they are played on the same field or not, sideline protection helps protect the most abused area on the field. The most common sideline protection is a Geotextile type of material applied to the team bench areas on the day of the game. Applied the morning of the game, the material is staked to the turf and then taped down. Sideline protection must be removed immediately after the game. While the initial purchase of the sideline protection may be costly, one of the benefits of using sideline protection is eliminating the need for sideline renovation at the end of each season.

Tactic 5: Growth Regulators

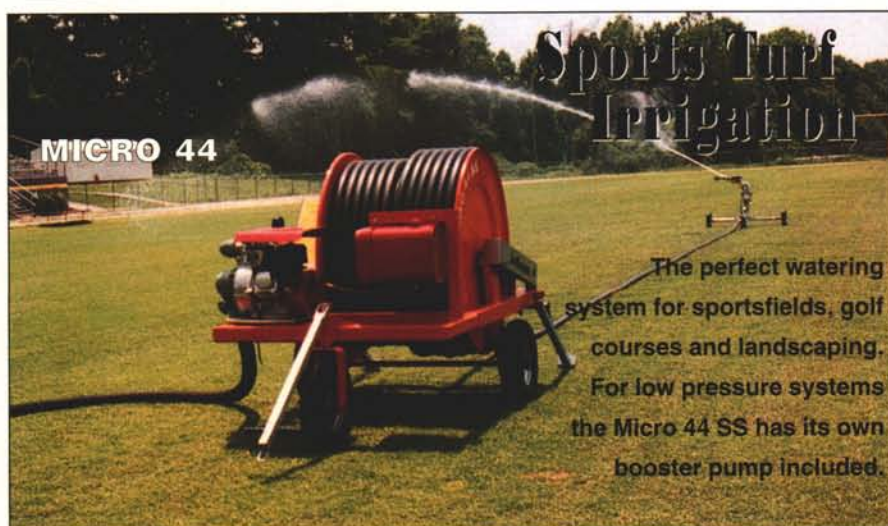
Painting fields is always a challenge when there is little time to mow and water the fields. Using a growth regulator in the paint helps to minimize the number of paintings needed during a week. Read the directions of the growth regulator to find the appropriate rate for the type of turf and to identify any other precautions that should be taken. Incorporate the regulator into the paint and apply. Depending on the type of growth regulator and frequency of applications, the time until the growth regulator takes effect will vary. The growth regulator will slow the growth rate of the turf in the line areas, which provides the benefit of not mowing off the lines each time the field is mown.

Tactic 6: Establish a Plan

A well-developed maintenance plan helps handle the demands that are placed upon the turf manager and the fields. The underlying concept of a maintenance plan is to keep the turf healthy, ultimately resulting in better playability, durability and aesthetics.

The maintenance plan should address the aerification program, overseeding, topdressing, fertility, irrigation and mowing height.

Aerifying should be done as frequently as possible. The method of aerification needs to be appropriate to the situation. From coring to slicing, the result will be improved pore space of the compacted soil which will help the roots get the air and water they need to survive. If the schedule doesn't allow time to aerify the entire field, assess the field and determine which area(s) need it the most. Soil type might need to be addressed and mitigated



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