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turf needs a good balance of air, water, and nutrients in the soil to thrive.

With heavy play and practice schedules, sports fields easily become compacted, resulting in worn or bare turf areas. By adding porosity to the soil with inorganic soil amendments, even the hardest native soils can be amended to allow turf to recover more quickly and respond faster to regular maintenance. Additionally, improved soil allows fertilizers and pesticides to be more effective, sometimes at lower rates, to produce a better playing surface.

There are a wide variety of inorganic soil amendments on the market today that can add porosity to clay soils, and some have the ability to absorb water. The most important questions to ask are: Is the product durable, and is it effective? Does it have to be replaced frequently? How much must be added to make an effective improvement to the soil? And most important, how much of the water absorbed is available to the plants?

AXIS is a soil amendment made from 100% naturally occurring diatomaceous earth (DE). Incorporated into the soil, AXIS reduces compaction and increases water and air permeability of the soil. It increases plant available water, firms up soggy soils, loosens hard to work soils, provides better drainage and aids in nutrient transfer. All of this results in dramatically improved root growth and improved microbial activity. AXIS is the only soil amendment that not only absorbs 140% of its weight in water, but gives 94% of that water back to the turf as it is needed. The result is that you can water more deeply and less often and also make the most of any natural rainfall.

Turf managers have documented water savings of 30% and more by using AXIS in their golf courses, sports fields, and landscaping. The benefits of AXIS are permanent. It will not break down with freeze-thaw cycles and it will never plug up or stop working. You only have to apply it once for a lifetime of healthy turf.

New product

Pro's Choice has introduced Pro Red topdressing, the newest player on its all-star roster. This infield topdressing boasts our deepest red color, which will give your fields the color you want and the conditioning you need. Specially formulated to provide long-lasting red color and all the advantages you have come to expect from Pro's Choice.

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In hopes they won’t forget, we developed an environmental curriculum to help teachers and students better understand water’s vital role in nurturing and sustaining ecosystems. Everything we do revolves around water, so we feel it is our responsibility to not only develop irrigation products and technologies that manage this resource wisely, but to also educate others about The Intelligent Use of Water.” We want to do even more, and with your help we can. To partner with us, visit www.rainbird.com/IUOW.

The Intelligent Use of Water.” — LEADERSHIP  EDUCATION  PARTNERSHIPS  PRODUCTS
1. Create your “must attend” list. Review the schedule of speakers and topics and determine the “must see” sessions of all that are offered. I keep in mind the short-term issues of field and facility management that I'm directly responsible for, and highlight those talks that will address immediate concerns.

Each of us also has an idea of our administration’s long range goals and plans. Sessions that may help me become a more valuable asset when planning for the future are also circled as “must see.” I have a responsibility to upgrade my value to my employer when presented with the opportunity, and the STMA conference offers this chance. The Conference brochure will be on your desk soon (if it already has not arrived), and you will notice it has much greater detail about each session to help you create that perfect conference schedule. Check out the new online version, too, which is electronic, so you do not have to worry about downloading a huge file. You can also easily register online.

2. Ask key questions. The educators and your peers teaching the sessions and workshops offer a tremendous wealth of knowledge and experience. They are the experts who can advise you about the issues you’re facing. Go to these sessions with an idea of how they can benefit you. Attend with an open mind. Be prepared to soak in the presentation, actively pull ideas from it, and then adapt them to your world. This helps us to be engaged in the presentation and really allows the presenter to connect with us.

3. Work the trade show floor. The STMA Exposition is the perfect place to evaluate products, find out what’s new in the industry, and meet face-to-face with company representatives. Approach your time on the trade show as thoughtfully as you do your conference education schedule. Usually attendees work the floor in one of two ways: 1) divide the floor in half and slowly work the first half one day and the other half on the next day; or 2) visit all the booths the first day, and hone in on the ones you need more information from on the second day. No matter which strategy
Experts on the Field, Partners in the Game.

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Employer/ Facility

- [ ] Business
- [ ] Home

Address

City | State | Zip
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      |       |       

Home phone | Work phone | Cell phone
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      |           |         

Fax | Email
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     |     

Signature

Direct Supervisor Name

Membership Category:

- [ ] Sports Turf Manager $110
  - [ ] Sports Turf Manager Associate* (Additional member(s) from the same facility) $75
- [ ] Academic $95
- [ ] Student (verification of enrollment) $25
- [ ] Commercial $295
  - [ ] Commercial Associate* (Additional member(s) from the same commercial company) $75
- [ ] Affiliate (Person who is indirectly or on a part-time basis, involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields) $50
- [ ] Chapter Dues (contact headquarters for amount) $____
- [ ] Contribution To SAFE Foundation (research, education and scholarship): $____

Total Amount Enclosed: $____

Payment Method:

- [ ] Check
- [ ] Money Order
- [ ] Purchase Order #: _____________________
- [ ] Credit Card: [ ] Mastercard [ ] Visa [ ] American Express [ ] Discover

Name on Card

Card #: _____________________ Exp. Date: _____________________

Signature:

*There must already be a national sports turf manager from your facility or commercial member from your company before you may sign up in the Associate category.

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Fill in 124 on reader service form or visit http://oners.hotims.com/13974-124
you use, wear comfortable shoes! Rather than
carrying home a mountain of literature, leave
your business card or have the company scan
your badge and mail the material to you.

4. Use the Exposition for better
decision-making. In this era of electronic
shopping and information gathering, it is easy
for attendees to forgo this important opportu-
nity to meet face to face with exhibitors. An initial
discovery from an online search can help you
develop questions about a product, but talking
face-to-face with a company representative will
give you the chance to touch, sit on, and/or feel
a piece of equipment that interests you.

Many times I've gone to a trade show
booth with an entirely incorrect perception of the
"how's and why's" of a product or service.
Oftentimes we don't have an immediate need
for the representative product or service, but can
predict a future need at our facility. When the
time comes to act on the future purchase or
contract, you will already have a basis of
understanding and hopefully you will have
developed a relationship with a trusted indus-
try professional that can help guide you
through the selection process.

5. Tap into exhibitors' expertise. We
have an obligation to our employers to take
full advantage of new technology, new servic-
es, and new ways of thinking about our jobs.
Exhibitors are one of our greatest resources.
They travel the region and the country, some-
times the world, observing successful and
unsuccessful operations. Their success
depends on our success as sports turf and facility
managers.

I know that too many of us see commercial
representatives and sales professionals as
adversaries. The fact is because of their trav-
els, expertise, and experience we can learn a
great deal from them about being better turf-
grass professionals! Exhibitors have a great
opportunity at the STMA trade show to help
add to the conference education experience.

6. Think partner, not vendor. My inter-
est in the trade show is to experience the exist-
ing and leading technology available to me as a
sports turf manager, and to maximize the
chance to develop solid professional relationships
with those with the same interests. The
relationship between commercial representa-
tives and sports turf management professionals
is symbiotic. Each exhibitor feels their product
can be beneficial in our quest to produce safe
and aesthetically pleasing playing fields and
facilities. Without properly examining each of
the products and services we cannot be sure we
are doing all we can to ensure the same.

Just as we incur a financial expense to
attend conferences and upgrade our expertise,
commercial representatives also incur costs in
support of that same upgrade in our expertise.
Supporting those that support us by purchasing
their goods and services ensures that our
entire profession remains healthy and full of
committed professionals. I truly feel, and have
been told so many times, that our trade show is
"different" in that we truly value our com-
mercial partners and stand arm-in-arm with
them in the mission of producing safer athletic
fields. Their role is very important to each of
us personally and also to the health of our
association. The trade show is part of our edu-
cation; our education sessions are part of their
enrichment. Please always remember that
some of our best friends work inside trade
show booths during that one week in January.

7. Report back. We too often fail to
report back to our administration on what we
learned. Write up a small summary of what
you learned and how it will benefit your oper-
ation. This is vital in securing the next oppor-
tunity and positively reflects on you as a pro-
fessional, ultimately making you a more valu-
able employee. My administrators feel the
time and expense to attend the STMA con-
ference is worthwhile in my professional
development. The tangible solutions I've
learned at STMA and then implemented at
our facility also reinforce how important my
attendance is at the conference and trade
show. It adds to my credibility when I
acknowledge that importance by way of a
short summary upon my return.

8. Have your house in order. Make
certain that your facility will be running
smoothly while you are away. Develop a plan
for how operations will continue in your
absence. Designate who is in charge and let
your administration and peers know. You
should consider leaving contact information
so that you can be kept current of any con-
cerns that arise in your absence.

9. Spend time renewing old friend-
ships. The conference is a great time to catch
up with friends in our business. It's our one
time during the year that we are totally sur-
rrounded by those who are involved in this
profession — whom we can share our wars sto-
ries with and empathize with when they tell us
about their challenges. Some of the very best
people in this world are in our profession.
Take the time to reconnect, learn from them,
and rejuvenate!
10. **Spend time meeting new friends.** Networking is very important and very rewarding. Of all the “green” industries, ours may maximize the networking as well as, or better than, any of the others. Your new contacts will bring new ideas and solutions to you. We are an industry willing to share our knowledge, experiences, and practices with each other. We need all the teammates we can gather throughout our journey of sports turf management.

I encourage each of us to prepare for the STMA Conference and Exposition to maximize our opportunities to grow and become even better professionals.

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Mike Andresen, CSFM, is athletic turf manager, Iowa State University, and president of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

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Eric Hansen
Head Grounds Keeper
LA Dodgers

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www.stma.org
MRSA and synthetic fields: more research is in

Editor's note: In our May 2006 issue we ran a story about a study that found that "infilled systems are not a hospitable environment for microbial activity." There are other views on this subject however, including that of the manufacturer of TurfAide, an antimicrobial product marketed to owners of synthetic turf systems. In the spirit of fairness, we offered them an opportunity to present their information.

en Midwest high school athletes from one school last year contracted MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), a powerful bacteria. The luckier of the bunch came out with deep scars while others emerged from hospital beds after weeks of strong antibiotics. All felt relief that the microorganism hadn’t taken a bigger toll.

"When my son contracted MRSA, he had to take heavy antibiotics, bleach baths, wash with antibacterial soap, and de-contaminate all textiles that he touched, including our couches and everything in his room, with scalding hot water for weeks," says Sue Schnitz, mother of Robert Schnitz, who was one of the first to contract MRSA on the team. "We were lucky. I thought his leg would have to be amputated. Instead my son is left with bullet-sized scars on the back of his leg."

Teams from high school levels to the pros such as the Washington Redskins and Cleveland Browns have dealt with cases of staph outbreaks. All, no doubt, would tell the athletic community one simple fact: MRSA and staph infections are indeed a threat and awareness and action is a must.

MRSA defined

MRSA is a strain of the staph bacteria and is otherwise known as a “super bug” because of its resistance to methicillin. In athletics,
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And we know what it can do for your business.

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staph and MRSA infections create problems when scrapes, burns, and cuts are involved, enabling the bacteria to enter the body’s bloodstream; instances that are far too common in sports and on synthetic turf fields.

“Athletes in all arenas need to be aware of MRSA’s growing threat on the community. Staph infections are not to be taken lightly,” says Dr. Rod Walters, doctor of sports education formerly at the University of South Carolina.

The bacteria usually cause mild skin infections such as boils or pimples, but by entering the bloodstream through open wounds, it can instigate infections such as sever pneumonia, internal organ and joint infections and toxic shock syndrome.

Staph, once believed to be confined to hospital settings, has over time become more resistant and increased in virulence; the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that from 1995 to 2004, the percentage of staph infections caused by MRSA has increased from 22% to 63% [1]. The CDC also estimates that around 130,000 people are hospitalized with MRSA each year. This year the Archives of Internal Medicine reported that MRSA's frequent occurrence is around 11 times greater than past estimates reported [2]. Sports Illustrated states that staph is so highly contagious that a “quick high five” can transmit the bacteria if both athletes have turf burns or abrasions in their skin [3].

“A higher percentage of Staphylococcus aureus have become resistant in recent years,” says Dr. Bruce Muma, chief medical officer at Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital. “As community outbreaks become more prevalent outside of hospitals, healthcare experts nationally are facing a crisis that needs the help of a proactive community to beat.”

Where is MRSA found?

Staph infections, including MRSA, are pathogens that can be found everywhere, in fact, it lives in the skin and nose of about 30% of the population [4]. The bacteria can survive in indoor and outdoor environments and surfaces such as playgrounds, hospitals, prisons, health clubs and athletic settings for long periods (days and months). Specifically in the athletic environment, staph can live in locker rooms, whirlpools, towels, uniforms, mats, sporting equipment, and synthetic turf fields. Increasing knowledge in the medical community has brought to attention that staph can be transferred by textile and other surfaces as well as person to person contact.

Though the presence of Staphylococcus aureus in athletic settings such as locker rooms, health clubs, mats, exercise balls and weight rooms is commonly accepted in the community, it’s presence on synthetic turf fields has been debated. Today, recent independent studies confirm what doctors and athletic officials have suspected all along; the non-discriminatory staph bacteria indeed can live on synthetic fields. According to the Journal of Clinical Microbiology, who clinically studied staph’s ability to survive on a variety of substrates,