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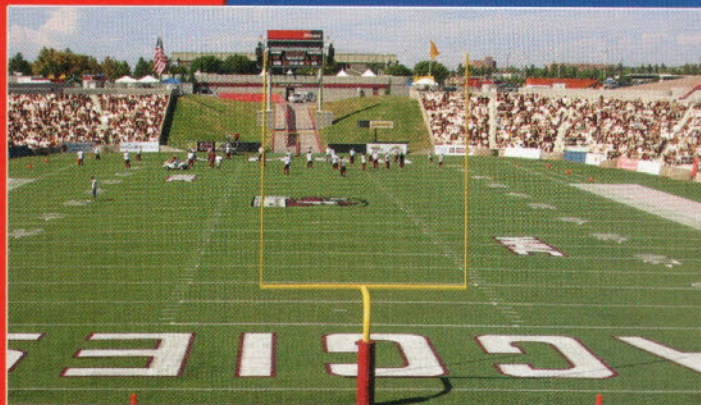
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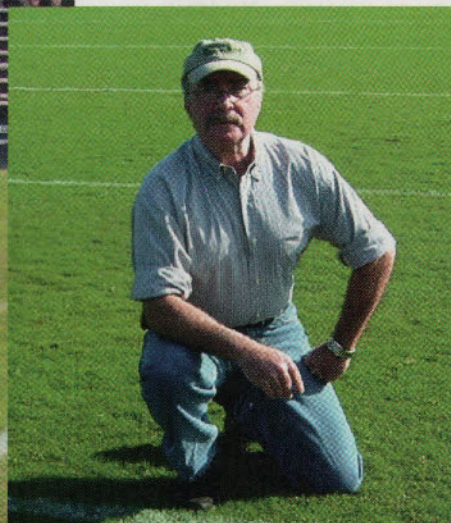


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20

FEATURES

Field Science

- 8** How turfgrasses respond to mowing
- 16** Much ado about adjuvants
- 20** Environmental turf craft
- 54** Increasing microbial diversity in sand-based soils with humic substances of APEX-10

Facilities & Operations

- 24** New ASTM standards for sports turf managers
- 28** Turf intern caught in "Civil War"
- 34** 5 tips to readying your résumé
- 36** Make a plan for lightning

Tools & Equipment

- 40** Alternative fuels power next wave of equipment

STMA Field of the Year

- 56** Noble and Greenough School, Dedham, MA wins the School/Parks & Rec Soccer Award

DEPARTMENTS

- From the Sidelines **6**
- STMA President's Message **7**
- John Mascaro's Photo Quiz **23**
- STMA In Action/SAFE Foundation . . **61**
- Rebuilding Doc's Dugout. **67**
- STMA Chapter News **68**
- Marketplace. **69-71**
- Online Education **72**
- Advertisers' Index **73**
- Reader Information Form (Green Mediator) **73**
- Q&A. **74**

On the cover: Action from Greene Field, our final Field of the Year winner from 2006, Nobles School in Dedham, MA led by Peter Thibeault and Joe Caseault.

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Just got off the phone with Tanya Brady, manager of risk management for the Waukegan (IL) Park District. She shared some advice for turf managers with regard to keeping you out of a courtroom; a lot of it is common sense but if what she said keeps even one reader out of trouble, it's worth passing along.

There are differences between working for a government entity like a park district and a private employer because employees of the former might have "tort immunities" that preclude them from being part of any lawsuit (your state's laws might be different.) Brady urges you to consult with your employer's legal counsel to see where you stand.

Documentation is a big part of doing things right. Even when you are hiring, make sure the potential employee has the degree, licenses, etc., that he or she says. Keep those checklists and other documents you create when conducting site inspections or doing regular maintenance to prove you've done the work. Though filling out daily work orders, etc., might be a pain it can prove you did your due diligence and keep you out of a lawsuit. Especially important is tracking your use of chemicals, how much you apply and when you apply it.

Brady says you need to keep these records for 3-5 years; Waukegan PD is in the process of building computer databases for this info, and some employees use PDAs in the field to feed info right into those databases. But if you have to keep the paper, keep the paper; if you've gone digital, back up those files and keep a disk in a separate office.

Having good policies and procedures in place and being able to prove you provided training to employees regarding those policies is also a must, she says. Also make sure you have an emergency response plan in place for severe weather or an injury in the field. If you use outside contractors, make sure the contract is clear about transfer liability so if they screw up, it's not legally your fault. And make sure they have insurance themselves! You should confirm their insurance carrier is legitimate and that you are named as an "additional insured" on their policy.

You need to know your own policy and its procedures for reporting claims. What needs to be reported using what form by when? Messing this up could lead to no coverage. Know what is covered and what isn't. For example, a storm knocks over some trees—if you've documented those trees as "landscape" then you might be covered but if the insurer can call them "standing timber" then you could be on the hook for cleanup and replacement costs.

Finally, Brady says if your policy offers a risk assessment, take advantage of it. It's always good to have a third party who knows your policy well take a look around at least once a year.

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Getting it done

The Sports Turf Managers Association continues to grow and reach out! At the conference I'll be looking to catch that annual positive vibe. It's the nourishment I need to reenergize for another grueling year out on the fields. Hopefully, you'll be able to make the trek to Phoenix. Your bosses would find you soaking up the powers of warm sunshine and helping STMA deliver great education, networking with new and old friends, and celebrating noteworthy achievements by colleagues.

The culture of this association is very active because the level of involvement by you is high! STMA isn't doing great work because we "just decided it needed to be done." STMA's value is high because members are deciding that there's work to be done, they like the direction of that work, and they can see how delivering it makes a difference. We have 18 committees in STMA with many of those having additional sub-committees. The amount of work being done by committees is exceptional. It's also exceptionally important!

Dr. Martin Luther King, whose birthday we celebrate this month, once said, "Life's most urgent question is, what are you doing for others?" Our committee members can clearly answer this question with pride. In 2007, more than 200 members invested time and talents into committee work. That is a staggering number. The Strategic Plan is our work plan. I have to admit, when we developed the plan last fall, the plan seemed very aggressive and challenging. Even with our exceptional CEO, Kim Heck and the fabulous staff she has, I would not have bet we'd be this far along.

In association circles we have a small full-time staff. Just running the office is a handful! Kim and her staff have been amazing. The committee chairs and members worked their tails off accomplishing tasks and pressing forward. Every one of our committees is on target and on schedule. We identified "education" as a main platform. The Information Outreach Committee organized and put together more pieces of education than I thought could be done in 3 years! The Certification Committee had numerous items they wanted to accomplish and WOW, are they working! Kim Heck was asked to focus on creating alliances with other associations and now STMA now has more partnerships than ever before. These are just three small examples of the many I could illustrate.

It's time again to prioritize and refocus each committee's charge for 2008. Having members engaged and doing the work ensures STMA looks and feels like "us." We all want STMA to have great value to members and to others in our industry. A strong STMA sells to all others that our profession, and your job, has great value. Please let Headquarters know if you'd like to volunteer to serve on a committee. The work will not be burdensome, but the results are vital to our future success. Volunteering will be extremely gratifying, and you'll be answering life's most urgent question.



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Mike Andresen

How turfgrasses respond to *mowing*

By Dr. Doug Linde

One Saturday evening when I was 16 I had had enough with the slow putting greens at my father's golf course. I slithered into his maintenance shop and lowered the height of cut on the triplex greens mower. Although I had no idea how much I lowered the height, the test cut on the practice green seemed pretty good to me. The next few days golfers were commenting to my father on how fast the greens played. His investigation included seeing some scalp marks and asking his mechanic if he'd touched the cut height, and he soon determined what I had done. I was then given one of my first lessons on how mowing affects turf!

Here I'll share that lesson and others I've learned about the effects of mowing on turf:

Plant's response to each mowing

Mowing causes plant stress! Fortunately, turfgrasses are well adapted to this stress. There are a variety of responses that occur every time

a single turfgrass plant is cut. One response is fluid exudes from the cut leaf—this includes water and organic compounds. The odor of a freshly cut turf is evidence that organic compounds are leaving the plant through the wound.

Another plant response after being cut is to repair the wound. Like a flesh wound in humans, the open wound becomes an entrance for disease-causing organisms and it's important the plant repairs it as soon as possible. Stored energy (carbohydrates) is used in the repair.

Stored energy is also used in the next plant response to cutting which is to replace the cut leaf tissue by growing new leaf tissue. Simultaneously, the plant is using extra energy for repair and regrowth while it is producing less energy for itself via photosynthesis because part of the plant's energy generator (the leaf) has been removed. As a result, an energy "dip" occurs after each cutting. The plant attempts to replenish its energy reserves as soon as its leaf tissue becomes sufficient again. Scalping, excessive defoliation, and environmental stresses can slow the replenishment and weaken the plant.



Mowing a heat and drought-stressed turf can compound problems.



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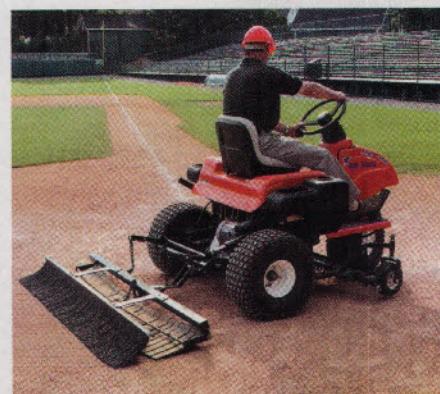
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Despite being well adapted to cutting, turfgrass plants are still under some stress after being mowed. In addition, when energy reserves are adequate the plant can better tolerate cutting and other stresses. When reserves are inadequate, the plant is weakened by cutting and more prone to problems, especially if under other stresses such as wear, drought, heat, disease, etc.

A final plant response to cutting is root growth stops for a period. The regeneration of new leaves takes priority over root production and energy is diverted to repair and grow the leaf.

Plant's response to regular mowing

When a turfgrass plant is subjected to regular mowing, it causes three responses. First, the plant produces more tillers that increase the density of the turf stand. This response alone is the reason to mow a stand of young seedlings as soon as possible. Second, the plant and all its parts get smaller in size. This dwarfing of the plant leads to the third response of lowering the crown closer to the soil surface.

These responses may take weeks to fully occur thus it's important to follow the "one-third rule" to determine mowing frequency. Removing no more than one-third of the leaf surface at any one mowing induces the desired responses described above without placing excessive stress on the plant. Following the "one-third rule" also reduces clippings, decreases the severity of the energy "dip" after

mowing, and minimizes scalping.

Plant's response to closer mowing

The plant's response to closer mowing depends on whether or not the lower height of cut is within the plant's tolerance range. Each turfgrass species has a cutting height range it can tolerate and still produce an adequate turf cover. When mowing closer within that tolerance range, the plant becomes smaller, the rootzone shorter, tillering and density increase, leaf texture gets finer, and carbohydrate production and storage decrease.

Most of these responses result in a plant that is less tolerant to environmental and disease stress. When mowing closer but below the plant's tolerance range there are some additional responses such as scalping and/or a weakening because the plant doesn't have sufficient tissue for photosynthesis. A turf stand of these plants can become thin and overtaken by weeds. Therefore, set cutting heights within the species tolerance range.

The most significant response listed above is a smaller plant. Smaller plants produce less energy and have a shorter rootzone. Fewer roots are needed to support the smaller shoots. A turf with a shorter rootzone has a decreased capacity to absorb water and nutrients from the soil, thus making it necessary for more frequent irrigation and fertilization.

As my father taught me, lowering the height of cut on a mower



Plants that are scalped take more time and energy to recover.