



Let's Lead the Way

In July's Front Office, I urged you to support development of environmentally friendly techniques in the green industry, and to incorporate available technology into your own programs. Sports turf managers are charged with the task of safeguarding their grounds, while protecting the athletes that use them at the same time. Natural solutions to maintenance problems help accomplish both goals.

Composting is a good place to start, and it's relatively easy to work a program into your existing maintenance system. On *The Compost Resource Page*, Chris Palmarini reports, "Yard and food wastes make up approximately 30 percent of the waste stream in the United States." Unfortunately, landfill structures lack the mechanisms that encourage these materials to decompose.

Landfills cut off the supply of oxygen needed to breakdown organic materials. The anaerobic environment this creates actually slows the process of decay. These giant mounds of waste may hide the problem from view, but they do more harm than good in the process.

Palmarini goes on to say, "Composting most [yard and food] waste streams would reduce the amount of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) requiring disposal by almost one fourth." This would greatly reduce the pressure we're putting on our landfills — they're really being pushed to their limits as things stand.

Essentially, these massive piles of garbage are nothing more than giant compost heaps themselves. But by composting standards, they're very poorly managed.

Successful composting requires careful attention and specific procedures. However, the methods are not difficult, and they're certainly not overly time consuming. If you incorporate a composting program into your regular maintenance routine, you'll find that the rewards will greatly outweigh your efforts.

Composting produces several positive side effects that can directly influence the efficiency and effectiveness of your program. Digital Visions Consulting lists several of these benefits on their website: www.Digitalseed.com.

A successful composting program will produce a nutrient-rich end product that can be applied to fields to stimulate growth, improve disease resistance, and increase drought tolerance. The organic material can act as a soil amendment or fertilizer, and it won't cost you a dime to create it — I know that many of you are feeling the squeeze of a tight budget right now.

As a soil amendment, composted material can improve both soil structure and soil chemistry. In clay soil, it binds to the tiny particles to open the soil to air and water. It also helps sand-based soil, filling the gaps between large sand particles to help the soil retain water. Further, composted matter bonds to micronutrients, such as iron, copper, manganese, and zinc, and increases their availability in the soil.

With all of the positive aspects of composting, it's amazing that these programs remain the exception rather than the rule. More and more office-based businesses are catching on to the benefits of recycling, and are incorporating programs into their operating systems. Is the green industry going to sit still while these businesses lead the fight to clean up the environment from air-conditioned offices?

Steve Berens, Editor
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Tip o' the Month



The Turf Tear-Out Problem

by Floyd Perry

Whether your field hosts under-12 Little League games or professional-level events, turf wear-out in front of the pitcher's mound is the number one eyesore. It can also be a serious liability problem.

Let's evaluate and attempt to solve this problem, or at least alleviate some concerns. As progressive groundskeepers, we all know that "turf grows by the inch, and is killed by the foot." Let's avoid some of the foot traffic with innovative maintenance ideas.

The Arizona Diamond Backs cut out a path from the mound to the home plate area at this recreational



complex. They have maintained a level of consistency of turf and clay, and have removed a constant maintenance concern.

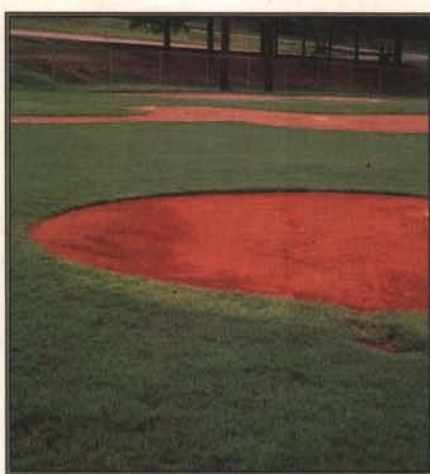
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One positive suggestion is to cut your turf from a sod plot. With a square-nosed shovel, cut to a depth of six inches, and replace the bare areas with sod blocks. Topdress your seams, roll or tamp, and hand water. The field will be ready for play immediately, since the roots are already growing in the deeply cut sod.



With community fields and their varying pitching distances, it's penny wise to cut out a keyhole or oval shape in front of the mound. This way, frustrating resodding, poor appearance, and unsafe lips won't bring your fields down in the taxpayers' eyes.



Some facilities choose permanent prevention by using artificial turf surfaces.

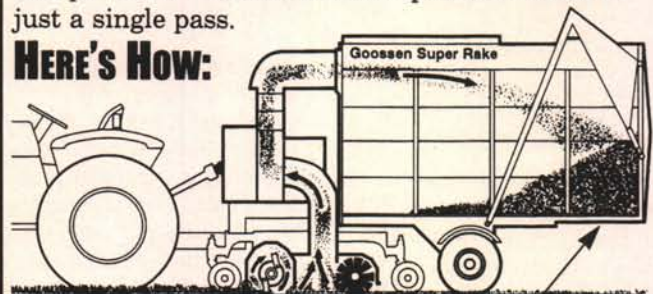
Floyd Perry is author of three books: *The Pictorial Guides to Quality Groundskeeping: I Covering the Bases; II There Ain't No Rules; and III Maintain It Easy, Keep It Safe.* He also produces two videos: *The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance: Vol. 1, Softball; and Vol. 2 Baseball.* For more information, call: (800) 227-9381, or visit his web site: <http://gms.simplenet.com>.

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