

On the national level, Kurcab has been a busy participant as well. At the STMA National Conferences in 1998 and 1999, he served as a discussion leader for round-table discussions on Poa Annuua and the effective use of tarps. In 2000 he led two sessions on establishment and grow-in and successful over-seeding. This year, he will lead three sessions, dealing with the certification process and stabilizing playing surfaces.

Awards and recognition are not new to Kurcab. He was the 1984 recipient of the Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association (RMRTA) Scholarship. In 1988, he received the RMRTA Turf Professional of the Year Award; in 1990, the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) Excellence in Landscape Merit Award. And in 1999 The STMA honored him with the Dick Erickson Award, one of STMA's four Founders Awards.

Kurcab's dedication to the profession not only results in better fields, it results in better turf professionals. Several men and women have served under Kurcab through his position with the Broncos, and they have gone on to prominent positions in the industry as well.

"Ross is a great teacher, as evidence by the people who have done internships with him and gone on to other professions in the field," said Koski.

In addition to Smith, Abby McNeal, assistant facilities and grounds manager for Colorado State University, interned under Kurcab in the early 1990s. Both have nothing but heavy praise for the man they credit in helping them prepare for their professional careers.

"Ross has a strong passion for what he does," said McNeal. "He always wants to learn and try new things. That energy is very positive and easy to feed off of."

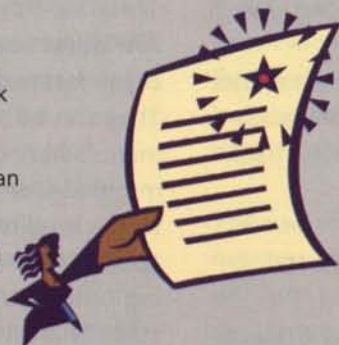
McNeal, who is in frequent contact with Kurcab to ask for advice or information, added: "He's one of my biggest mentors; he's always making me think."

According to Smith, "Ross is a great teacher, he's dedicated and he has a natural instinct on how to grow grass. He's been a great boss, teacher and friend."

Added Smith: "I've never met anyone who loves their job more than he does. His job is very dear to him. He's definitely found a career he loves."

sportsTURF's Managers of the Year

2001: Ross Kurcab
2000: Eugene Mayer
1999: Dr. Henry Indyk
1998: Mike Schiller
1997: Floyd Perry
1996: Steve Wightman
1995: Ed Birch
1994: Dr. Kent Kurtz
1993: Roger Bossard
1992: George Toma
1991: Murray Cook
1990: Harry Gill
1989: Dr. Fred Grau



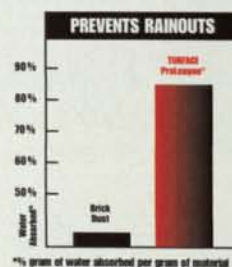
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Know Your Sports Field Conditioner

In the past, there have been some misconceptions about sports field conditioners. The following definition of terms and clarification of product characteristics has been put together based on significant research and development to help you make informed decisions about which products will work best on your baseball and sports turf fields.

What are the most important characteristics to look for in a soil conditioning product?

Know your mineral! What is the base material of the product, because different minerals perform differently? Does the mineral's inherent characteristics enhance field conditions?

Absorption. How have the characteristics of the mineral been optimized for maximum absorption?

Color. Will the product help you meet the standards for a good-looking field? For example, on a baseball field a deeper red color provides maximum visual contrast for the white ball.

Liquid Holding Capacity (LHC). Measures the internal pore volume of a mineral. What sort of capacity for moisture does the product have? What is its ability to retain that moisture.

Stability. Will the product resist breakdown and deliver long-lasting performance?

Absence of Dust. Will the product go on cleanly and not blow away with the first breeze or blow back in an infielder's face?

What type of product meets these criteria?

The physical and chemical makeup of a mineral will directly impact its

performance as a soil conditioner. Research shows the best available mineral for sports turf applications is montmorillonite clay. Unique deposits of Montmorillonite clay are found in northern Mississippi and southern Illinois. The internal pore size of montmorillonite is very small. This creates surface tension that absorbs and holds water tightly. Other minerals either do not absorb as much or do not hold water as tightly. In order to process montmorillonite clay into a high quality sports field conditioner, the manufacturing process must include super-heating.

What does super-heating mean?

Super-heating is a process (typically 1250-1500°F) which removes all moisture from montmorillonite clay. Super-heating transforms the clay into a hard, ceramic-like product. It fixes (or case hardens) the crystalline structure, optimizing the absorptivity of the pores and permanently hardening the granules.

Montmorillonite, when super-heated, absorbs and exchanges moisture in the soil. Also, because it has been case hardened, it is physically stable and will not break down in the field. In other words, super-heating optimizes montmorillonite for sports field applications.

Are other soil conditioners super-heated?

They can be. Super-heating is a manufacturing process ideal for montmorillonite. The term refers to the level of thermal treatment applied in processing. Super-heating optimizes the hardness and stability of montmorillonite without compromising its porosity,

making it a perfect soil conditioner. Super-heating other minerals may or may not optimize them for sports fields.

What is the best way to super-heat montmorillonite clay?

The best method of producing high quality soil conditioners is to utilize a seven-step process. The raw absorbent clay is mined, sized, dried, ground into specific particle sizes, dried again, super-heated, and de-dusted. Because the granules are ground and sized prior to the drying and super-heating processes, each granule receives the full benefit of these steps. In other five-step processes, drying is the first process, then grinding and sizing. The drying cannot drive out all the moisture in the larger granules. This results in lower liquid holding capacities and lower absorptivity.

Are there other important differences?

Yes. If the dust has not been removed from the product, you lose part of what you pay for at the first sign of wind. You also run the risk of the product blowing back in the face of your players. Also, a deep red color is inherent to clays found in northern Mississippi and southern Illinois.

What does vitrified mean?

Vitrification is a thermal process that involves higher temperatures than super-heating (typically 1800-2200°F) to transform minerals into a hard, glass-like material. Vitrification is not optimal for montmorillonite. It wastes heat and can destroy porosity. Vitrification may be optimal for other minerals, but none with the excellent sports turf attributes of montmorillonite.

Since vitrification processes hotter, does that make it better than super-heating?

Again, you have to know what mineral is being used. Vitrifying a montmorillonite clay will not provide any benefits. In fact, important performance characteristics such as absorption and the holding and releasing of moisture will be seriously degraded if higher vitrification temperatures are used with montmorillonite clay.

Is this a process used in sports field products?

Yes, but the mineral, that undergoes vitrification, lacks the absorbent characteristics of montmorillonite.

How can I tell the difference between vitrified clay and super-heated montmorillonite?

A simple test is to put a handful of both products on a plate or on your field right next to each other. Pour water in a puddle between the two products and watch the montmorillonite clay pull water away from the other material. The super-heated montmorillonite clay has a much stronger affinity for water due to its extensive network of small, thirsty pores.

What do professional groundkeepers use on their Major League ballfields?

Three quarters of the Major League groundkeepers choose montmorillonite clay to maintain their fields. In fact, the World Series champions for each of the last five years have used montmorillonite soil conditioners.

The use of properly super-heated montmorillonite clay on a ballfield will help prevent rainouts, break up compaction and improves the fields resiliency.

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STMA 2001—Looking Forward

by Steve Trusty

This is an exciting time for sports turf managers and for the profession of sports turf management. Participation in sports is beginning at an ever-younger age and continuing into adulthood, often to the senior citizen level. The growing interest and enthusiasm for soccer is creating the demand for more field time and for more fields. Rapidly advancing technology is reflected in the design and construction of new stadiums all across the world.

It's also a demanding time for sports turf managers, a time that calls for enhancing one's own knowledge and skills to meet the multiple challenges of new technology, increased field use demands and field quality expectations. As the profession moves forward to reach new heights in the new millennium, the Sports Turf Managers Association also is moving forward with the

implementation of a Strategic Plan to serve its members and the industry as a whole.

This is reflected in the new STMA Mission Statement recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee and ratified by the STMA Board of Directors in June of 2000. The Mission Statement calls for STMA: "To be the recognized leader in strengthening the sports turf industry and enhancing members' competence and the acknowledgement of their professionalism."

This is a clear statement not just of what we are, but also of what we



are becoming and what we will achieve. It's a powerful tool to give a united sense of direction and focus to our organization.

The words were carefully chosen for the messages they represent.

The phrase "strengthening the sports turf industry" focuses on the process of making it stronger in areas of knowledge, performance and leadership. The phrase "enhancing members' competence" focuses on the quality of being competent, well qualified, capable and fit to accomplish the requirements of the position. The word acknowledgement in the phrase "the acknowledgement of their professionalism" focuses on developing broader recognition of the fact that sports turf managers are professionals whose professionalism is to be recognized and affirmed.

This leads into STMA's updated Positioning Statement, also adopted at the STMA June Board Meeting. The Positioning Statement defines what STMA desires to create for all of its stakeholders, in the long-term: "Providing the best sports surfaces for all levels of play."

Obviously, this is a long-term plan

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that will need to be continually reviewed, updated and fine-tuned.

The following priorities—expressed as Master Strategies—have been identified for implementation in the short-term. These Master Strategies and Implementation Guidelines are, in the judgment of the Strategic Planning Committee and the STMA Board, critical to STMA's future success in serving its members and representing their interests.

Develop Performance Measurements

This is part of an ongoing Master Strategy that has been moving forward within the Association since its formation and which has become increasingly structured with its growth over the last five years. It has resulted in a strong and growing organization with a sound financial base. The current finance committee, chaired by STMA Treasurer Bob Campbell, developed a more detailed and far-reaching set of financial guidelines, which were adopted by the STMA Board at its September meeting.

The Board, various committees and STMA Headquarters will work together to develop checks and balance systems for the strategic plan implementation. This will include development of formal statements of policy for the Board, Committees, Executive Director and STMA Staff.

Define and Promote Image

STMA will work with its membership, industry leaders, university personnel, administrator groups and others to identify and define an accurate positive image of the sports turf manager and the sports turf management profession. The input received from all these groups will be studied, categorized and summarized to define the image the STMA should project for the profession.

STMA will continue to promote the Certified Sports Field Manager program, the acceptance of the CSFM program among sports turf managers and recognition of the Certification among targeted audiences including athletic directors, parks and recreation and municipality directors, stadium managers, MLB, NFL and other key industry representatives.

STMA will develop a comprehensive marketing plan to achieve recognition of the image of the profession and the professional with clearly defined 1-year, 5-year, and 10-year goals.

Develop Education and Research Agenda

STMA's educational focus will seek to identify and prioritize the

educational and resource needs of its membership, students and the industry, identify solutions to industry challenges and enact programs to address these areas. STMA also will seek to identify and prioritize the educational needs of the general public pertaining to athletic fields and address those educational needs.

In addition, STMA has formed



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the Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments (SAFE), a separate 501(c)(3) corporation with purposes as outlined in the SAFE Mission Statement: "To support sports field specific research, education programs and environmental concerns to promote user safety."

Enhance Information and Member Services

STMA will develop and implement a systematic process to evaluate current and develop new Association programs and services in response to member, former member and potential member input. Among the areas of anticipated action are undertaking to provide and promote expanded networking opportunities for members to communicate and share knowledge and build professional relationships both within the US and internationally.

Strengthen and Enhance Chapters

STMA will work to strengthen the capacity of current affiliated Chapters and potential new Chapters to deliver education programs, information services and networking opportunities to members and other targeted audiences.

The Chapter Officers Training Session (COTS), held in conjunction with the STMA Annual Conference, has proved beneficial in this area. An additional area of assistance could be development of a series of procedures to facilitate Chapter interaction to help continue year-round the idea and information exchange that takes place at COTS.

Gathering Input

A major part of the entire implementation process involves seeking the input of the STMA membership on key issues of the industry, the profession and the Association.

An important survey will be undertaken in February of 2001 to do so. But please don't be limited to that. Your input is welcome anytime. Please feel free to contact me, any of the STMA officers or board members or any staff member at STMA Headquarters with your questions, comments and concerns. By working together, we'll move forward to meet the challenges of the new millennium and accomplish our long-term goal of providing the best sports surfaces for all levels of play.

Steve Trusty is Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers Association.

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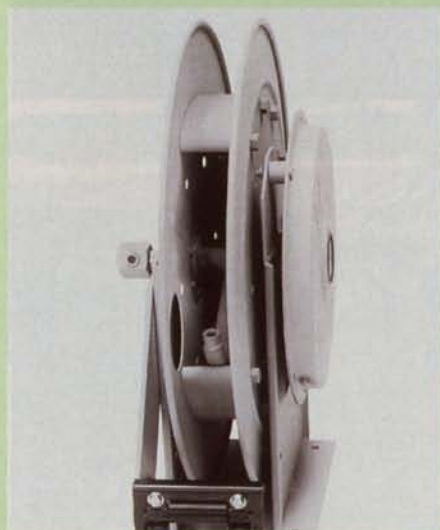
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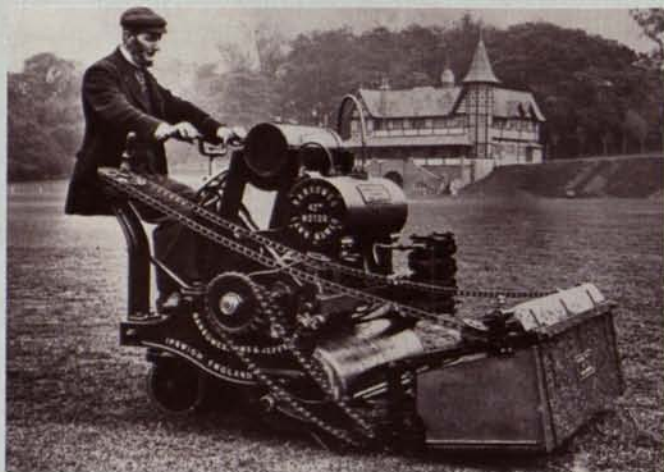
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Look at the Past

by Dr. Kent Kurtz



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