

**ATHLETIC FIELD MAINTENANCE  
THE ONLY COURSE OF ITS KIND**

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One of the first things I considered as the coordinator of MSU's two-year program in Lawn Care/Athletic Turf Management (LCAT) was our curriculum. That is, did it superbly prepare our students for an opportunity to succeed in their specific-career paths? In 1992, the program name changed from Lawn Care Technology to its present appellation. However, there weren't any classes that focused solely on athletic-turf management. I've addressed this deficiency by launching a new course.

Last fall I offered the class as a special-topic with one-semester hour of credit. This was a pilot project, and I appreciate the students' patience with me while I ironed out some of its kinks. During the last class meeting, I polled them about what direction the course should take in the future. Their strong opinion was that I should expand the class to a two-credit-hour course. Therefore, I'm preparing a request with the university for the establishment of a new course. Today, I'll give a synopsis of next year's offering as well as some of last year's particulars.

The class will begin on August 28 and end on October 16. It will meet for eight, two-hour sessions on Wednesday evenings. We'll usually meet at the Hancock Center where we can most easily combine both in- and out-of-classroom instruction. We'll also have a weekend session at a professional baseball facility. This year it will be on September 14 and 15, which is an open date for Spartan football.

To enroll in the class, you must have completed an introductory turf management course or Greg Lyman's School of Turfgrass Management. I'm requiring this prerequisite because we'll be spending little time on basic turf culture. We'll try to be as specific to athletic fields as we can. Based on 1995 tuition, the costs will be \$393 for a life-long-education student. If you don't want the two-semester-hours credit, you can enroll as a non-credit student for \$100 less. For enrollment details, please contact my secretary, Ms. Kathy Bedford at (517) 353-1956 after 1 p.m.

Topics we will cover include the following:

- Historical Development of Sports Turf
- Athletic-Field Soils and Root-Zone Modification
- Species and Cultivar Selection
- Soil Compaction and Turf Wear Management
- Field-preparation techniques and philosophies
- Wet-weather strategies
- Equipment Needs, Costs, and Procurement
- Artificial-Turf Maintenance
- Safety and Liability Concerns
- Regulatory Compliance
- Dealing with Coaches and Parents

I'll invite key people to help with the instruction. Each will address his or her specialties and will probably appear in the following order.

- Jim Crum, Ph.D., MSU Soil Scientist
- John Stier, M.S., MSU Sports Turf Research Associate
- John Rogers, Ph.D., MSU, Sports Turf Researcher
- Paul Rieke, Ph.D., Turfgrass Management Specialist
- Heather Nabozny, Sports Turf Manager, Michigan Whitecaps
- Tom Preslar, Sports Turf Manager, Lansing Lugnuts
- Rob Carson, Sports Turf Manager, Birmingham Schools
- Lowell Spots, Sports Turf Manager, MSU Athletics
- Betty Van Der Smissen, Ph.D., Recreational Safety and Liability Expert
- Greg Lyman M.S., MSU, Environmental Turfgrass Education Specialist

The weekend workshop will stress hands-on learning and practice with guidance from some of the above people. The venue will be a minor-league baseball facility here in the state. The play-offs will still be going on then, and the schedule will dictate which of the fields we can use. Last year we met at Bailey Park in Battle Creek where the Director of Field Operations, Mel Lanford (aka Dr. Dirt), was our host. He did a great job of letting the students know what it is like to work in his profession. We had several hours of on-the-field instruction. We also got to practice some of these skills during a ninety-four-team American Softball Association Class D national tournament. During this event we worked as crews doing four refits of eight fields at a time. We also had additional sessions on player-coach-management relations, equipment needs and procurement, supplies and labor budgeting, and career development and advancement.

This course will be fourteenth turf-specific course that the Institute of Agricultural Technology offers through the university's Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. If you or someone you know are interested in obtaining more information about turf management at MSU, then please don't hesitate to contact me, David Gilstrap, at (517) 355-0207.