

iciency to turf, excessive thatch contributes to disease problems. Topdressing or coring practices may have to be considered for those areas of the field where play is not intense.

### Cultural Practices

The recommended seeding rate for Kentucky bluegrass is 1.0 - 2.0 kg/100 m<sup>2</sup>. This seeding rate will provide 4.8 to 9.6 million seeds per 100 m<sup>2</sup>; about 5 seeds per square centimetre.

There are over three dozen cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass available for use in Canada (see Sports Turf Manager, Vol. 8, March, 1995). Generally a blend of two or more cultivars is preferred to capitalize on the slightly different attributes of each individual cultivar.

Kentucky bluegrass is responsive to phosphorus fertilization, particularly during the establishment period. A high rating on the soil test is desirable during this period. Where this initial high level of phosphorus fertility is achieved and clippings are not removed minimal phosphorus fertilization may be required in future years.

Kentucky bluegrass has a medium demand for nitrogen fertilization. Generally .25 to .75 kg N/100 m<sup>2</sup> per growing month is required for good growth, however these rates should be adjusted according to the sports turf managers experience in the colour and density he achieves from nitrogen. Potassium should be applied according to the rate suggested by a soil test. Alternatively a rough guideline is one kg of K<sub>2</sub>O for every two kg of nitrogen.

Disease on sports field turf is generally not a problem. Helminthosporium leaf spot, Fusarium patch (pink snow mold) and Typhula blight (grey snow mold) may be a problem under some conditions but chemical treatment is seldom necessary.

In recent years grub damage to sports fields from chinch bug and European chafer has become a problem in Ontario and Quebec. The insects damage the root system drastically which reduces the wear resistance of the turf. Where the grub population warrants chemical control is necessary.

The optimum cutting height for Kentucky bluegrass is one to two inches with the higher height preferred for sports fields. Cultivars have been developed for lower mowing heights for use on golf fairways but greater wear tolerance has not been shown to be associated with the lower mowing height.

# Bench Tarps Will Help You

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A few years ago we had just finished sodding the bench areas in Gryphon Stadium at the University of Guelph when I happened to read an article on Sports Turf and saw an advertisement for geotextile Ground Blankets or Bench Tarps.

They seemed to be the answer to one of our maintenance problems. Each year we found people were wanting to get on the field earlier in the spring. At a time when we were trying to refurbish the fields, the new, young tissue and the crown were being destroyed in the high traffic areas around the bench. Hence we had a yearly resodding job to do. Sodding was an automatic \$2,400 expenditure, just for the sod. This compared to the tarps which today would cost \$ 560.00 each, plus freight.

We decided to purchase two tarps from Warren's Turf Nursery of Indianapolis. The tarps measured 15 ft wide by 75 ft long and weighed approximately 150 lb each. They are easily transported in a pick-up truck, or if you have one, by a forklift. The tarps have the leading edge (75 ft) and sides stabilized with a 2-inch wide, polypropylene reinforcement tape. This is chain-lock stitched to the fabric, with brass tooth grommets installed every three feet along the front and sides. The tarp is a light green in colour and the tape a darker green.

On the day of the game, the tarps are removed from storage, placed on a pickup or forklift and dropped off at the edge of the field. They are then unrolled in the bench area and spiked down using 6-inch "7" shaped spikes. The spikes are placed down three sides of the tarp and the players benches are placed along the back length to hold that edge down.

The tarps are removed after the Saturday game. This is very necessary, especially if rain is expected because the tarps become not only heavier to lift, but also because of

their size, are very difficult to dry. It is also considered advisable in to remove the tarp no later than the morning after the game in order to maintain turf colour. The grass should be cut before the installation of the tarp. With freshly cut grass, once the tarp is removed it was found the grass will recover more quickly from both the weight of the tarp and foot traffic on the tarp.

Routine maintenance is minimal. The tarps are 100% polyester and very, very tough and durable. We lay them out on asphalt under our stadium to clean where they are broomed off and hung to dry, if necessary. Although not extremely heavy, they are very awkward to handle. At seasons end we have our Housekeeping Department steam clean them so that they look practically new again. They can also be washed with soap and water. They are placed in an unheated area for storage, summer and winter, with no adverse effects.

The application of pesticides or fertilizers just prior to putting the tarp down is a no-no!

I would recommend these tarps to anyone whose fields get continuous heavy wear. It may be used on soccer or football fields and on baseball diamonds to cover areas for batting practice.

Two companies that I am aware of that sell these blankets are - Warren's Turf Nursery, Inc. out of Indianapolis, Ind. and Covermaster, Inc. in Rexdale, Ontario. The material is available in different lengths and widths.

If you wish to save time and money on maintenance I would suggest you consider purchasing these tarps. Even if you have artificial turf (heaven forbid), they will prevent wear in a heavy use area. Try them, you will like them.

### A POINT OF VIEW

Weeds in a lawn are not the problem. The problem really is that the grass isn't dense enough to crowd out and keep out the weeds. Proper mowing, watering and fertilization will thicken the grass to a point where herbicides are rarely required for a weed-free lawn.

