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It should be understood that the principles and concepts provided in this article are very basic. Most all of us are sports field managers and not soil scientists. Our understanding of the different aspects of turf management is generated on a need to know basis. As the demand for quality, safety and playability of our sports fields increases, this demand will continue to push us to the limits of our abilities and understanding. I don't claim to know all there is to know about moisture management and its relationship to soil physics but I will continue to read and increase my understanding. As I do I will continue to provide our readers with what I consider to be accurate useable information. ♦

The following books were used as reference material and are highly recommended reading material for anyone wishing to gain more knowledge in this area.

Mcintyre, K. and Jacobsen, B. 2000. *Practical Drainage for Golf, Sportsturf and Horticulture* Sleeping Bear Press

Harpstead, M.I., Sauer, T. Bennett, W.F. 2001. *Soil Science Simplified* Iowa State University Press, Ames Iowa, 4<sup>th</sup> edition

Adams, W.A. and Gibbs, R.J. 1994. *Natural Turf for Sports and Amenity*. CAB International, Wallingford UK, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

Marshall, T.J., Holmes, J.W., Rose, C.W. 1999. *Soil Physics*. Cambridge University Press 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

## Ask The CSFM

*Jim Hermann, CSFM is a Certified Sports Field Manager. There are 35+ CSFM'S in the country and two in NJ. Jim has over 20 years experience in turf maintenance. Send your questions to jimtc@att.net*

**Question:** Due to wet weather and the hectic schedule I had this year, I did not get early fall fertilizer on my athletic fields until late September. I normally prefer to make this application around Labor Day. I then apply a second application around mid October, six weeks after my first application. I'm afraid it's too soon for a second application but if I wait much longer I'll miss the window. What should I do?

**Answer:** Fertilizer applied toward the end of the growing season is known as late season fertilization. As temperatures cool and top growth slows, the turf turns its energy to lateral growth and root development. A slow release nitrogen source at this time is beneficial to the turf in providing the nutrients necessary for continued development. Over stimulation caused by excessive amounts of water-soluble nitrogen at this time of year can cause over wintering problems such as snow mold.

The main question is this; what is the current condition of the turf? If the turf is still retaining good color and looking healthy, I would delay the late season fertilization. If fertilizer were applied after top growth ceased and the turf is totally dormant, this application would be considered a dormant application. The purpose and benefit of a dormant application differs from that of late season fertilization in that the benefits are reaped in the spring. Some of the nutrients are absorbed into the root system and some are held in the soil. In either case the majority of nutrients are utilized as the turf awakens from dormancy in the early spring. Its benefits are realized by the stimulation of root development, early green up, lateral growth and finally top growth. When dormant fertilizer is applied in the late fall, any spring fertilization should be delayed and only applied when visual evaluation of the turf reveals a deficiency. This typically becomes evident in the late spring when a light application of nitrogen along with phosphorous and potassium shown to be necessary by a soil test is all that is typically required. ♦

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