
County College of Morris: New Program Option in Turf and Turfgrass Management

by Craig Tolley*

The County College of Morris, Landscape and Horticultural Technology Program is pleased to announce a New Program Option in Turf and Turfgrass Management. This exciting new option will focus on preparing students to manage recreational and athletic turf areas including golf courses and sports fields. Graduates of this program will be ideal candidates for direct entry into the green industry or transfer to a 4 year institution.

Courses will be available as conventional Face-to-face courses, Hybrids (part online, part face-to-face), and as Online courses. For advisement/enrollment information please contact the Landscape and Horticultural Technology Program 973-328-5363 (Professor Craig Tolley or Jan-Marie Traynor) or the Office of Admissions 973-328-5100

*Professor, Biology and Chemistry Depart., Landscape and Horticultural Technology at County College of Morris. (www.CCM.edu).♦

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Taking Care of Athletic Fields is a Growing Business Turf Management Industry Booms as Golf Courses & Youth Sports Facilities Keep Expanding

Appeared in the New Jersey section of the Star-Ledger,
Monday, June 13, 2005
by Stefanie Cohen, Star-Ledger Staff

There's more to maintaining an athletic field than cutting the grass.

These days, people in charge of making sure the grass is green and clipped to perfection must understand plant pathology and soil chemistry. They must be trained in pesticides, turf varieties and fertilization. And it helps to know how to drive a John Deere tractor.

As golf courses and fields for youth sports continue to sprout across the state, the business of "turf management" practices has been growing like, well, a weed.

"There is major growth in this area," said Bruce Clarke, director of Rutgers University's Center for Turfgrass Science. "Every school system, every town, has athletic fields. It's becoming much more of a science than it has been."

And it is providing jobs.

Nearly 58,000 people work in turf management in New Jersey, Clarke said.

"We have seven or eight job openings per student each year," said Craig Tolley, a landscape and horticulture professor at the County College of Morris. Tolley said he has a three-inch binder on his desk full of job listings.

New Jersey spends \$2.6 billion a year on athletic field and golf course development and maintenance, commercial landscaping and sod and seed manufacturing, Clarke said. Golf courses spend \$540 million alone.

These figures come from an economic impact study of the "green industry" by Rutgers University. The study will be released this fall.

In the mid-1980s, the state had 219 golf courses. Now there are 293, a 34 percent increase, said Michelle Rickard, executive director of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association in Milltown.

Youth sports is another big factor.

Jim Hermann, CSFM of the Sports Field Managers Association in New Jersey, which was established six years ago as an educational clearinghouse

for the burgeoning turf management industry, said children don't play the way they once did. Stickball doesn't cut it anymore. Now they play organized sports year-round, giving athletic fields a workout.

Athletes' expectations have grown as well, Clarke said. People want to play on lush fields and courses like those they see on television. Then there is the liability factor. Towns don't want to be sued when someone twists an ankle on an uneven patch of grass, he said.

The growth of the industry is reflected in new college offerings tailored to meet the demand.

For example, this fall, the County College of Morris will start a degree program for Turf and Turfgrass Management. Ocean County College plans to teach its first turf management course next spring. Mercer County Community College, Brookdale Community College and Bergen Community College already offer the subject, among other schools in the state. About 40 high schools and vocational schools offer turf management classes as well, said Nancy Trivette of the state Department of Agriculture.

Rutgers University has a comprehensive turfgrass science program that prepares students for jobs throughout the green industry. In the past 20 years, the Rutgers program has added six faculty members to train a growing student body.

"It's more than cutting grass," said Brad Park, Rutgers' sports field management specialist.

Those wishing to enter the field, he said, need to be properly educated. With a degree, students can start their careers at a higher pay scale. Entry-level salaries range from \$25,000 to \$40,000, according to the Rutgers study.

Earlier this month, the Sports Field Managers Association sponsored a District I meeting for the industry at Sussex County Technical School in Sparta. Sports Field Managers from schools, townships, and recreational

facilities throughout Northwestern New Jersey came to see demonstrations of new machinery and hear lectures on topics like "Fertilizer Spreader Calibration."

Participants also watched some Sussex Tech students, who are studying turf management, convert a softball field from grass to clay. The students expertly circled the infield on a Rotadiron, or reverse tiller, which pulls soil to the top of the field and buries rocks and grass at the bottom.

Jim Welch, a 16-year-old freshman, took a break from work and leaned against his shovel. Wearing a John Deere hat and blue jeans streaked with soft red dirt, he contemplated the thought of attending the new turfgrass program at County College of Morris.

"I didn't think I would ever go to college before, but maybe now," he said. "Maybe." ♦

Did You Know?

Raising mowing height 1/4 to a 1/2 inch during the summer will help to maintain turf quality. ♦

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, July 27, 2005 District III Meeting

Lakewood Blueclaws baseball field tour and complimentary game sponsored by Wilfred MacDonald. District III members are invited at no cost. Watch for invitations in the mail. Questions? call 908-730-7770

Wednesday, August 3, 2005 - Rutgers Lawn, Landscape and Sports Turf Field Day

See research plots, equipment demonstrations and trade show. Rutgers Adelphia Research Farm, Adelphia, NJ For more info contact 732-932-9375, ext 338 Or visit www.njturfgrass.org or www.sfmanj.org

September 9 & 10, NJLCA Brush up on topics for the Certified Landscape Technician

September 14 - CLT test written only at County College of Morris, Randolph

October 1 - CLT test at CC of Morris, Randolph

For more information, call the NJLCA office at (201) 703-3600 fax (201) 703-3776

September 19-22, 2005 NCA Training Course, "Retrofitting for Accessibility" Gatlinburg, Tennessee

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To keep up to date with what's going on at SFMANJ please read the following information:

Email – If you have a new email address or if you haven't been receiving up to date info from us please send us an email from your's so we can keep you up on the latest events. If you have a blocker please remember to allow us in from hq@sfmanj.org and finally, we promise not to add attachments or give your email out to anyone without your permission.

2005 Directory – The directory will be in the mail very soon if you haven't received it already. Only the lead person will receive a directory. If you want more than one directory for your organization, you may purchase more at \$20 a directory or you may copy the one we send you. You will not receive the full bylaws however, you will receive any changes in the bylaws. If you would like a new copy of the bylaws email us for one.

2006 Membership brochure – We are accepting applications for advertising in our 2006 membership brochure. We will order 2000 brochures, which are distributed throughout the year at various shows, classes and mailings. August 31 is the deadline for receiving applications. Check out our website for more info at www.sfmanj.org or call us at 908-730-7770.

Articles – We welcome articles for the newsletter "Update". Anyone can write an article. Tell us what you are doing. Do you have an idea you would like to share? Do you have a job opening? Are you looking for work? Do you want to sell anything? Have you gotten a new job and you would like to share the news with your membership? Email us information you would like to share with your membership at hq@sfmanj.org

Sports Field of the Year Contest – September is the deadline to enter your field. Now is the time to take pictures. Put your town on the map. Let everyone see your hard work. See the article in this newsletter for the rules.

Board of Directors – SFMANJ is seeking applications for an opening on the Board of Directors for the seat of Treasurer. Any member in good standings with the capability of balancing a checkbook with quickbooks and able to donate three hours a month please email us with your resume at hq@sfmanj.org

Letter we received – Thank you to Leonard M. DeBuck for the kind words and encouragement concerning our Spring field day. See letter in this newsletter. ♦

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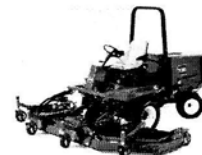
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- Budgetary restrictions limiting the availability of essential materials, equipment and/or qualified personnel for proper maintenance.

- Reliance upon unproven miracle products and/or procedures for the correction of deficiencies and/or maintenance.

- A lack of understanding and appreciation of the value of a high quality natural turf-playing surface for the protection of participating athletes and pride in the facilities.

Turfgrasses on playing surfaces which have deteriorated for any one of the cited and/or other reasons can be effectively restored to a satisfactory condition by means of renovation procedures exclusive of correction of built-in construction deficiencies. The specific steps in the renovation procedure are determined by:

- Soil sampling and laboratory testing as a means of determining soil acidity, soluble salts and available nutrients (macro and micro). This information will serve as a basis for the correction of deficiencies by appropriate liming and fertilizing.

- Removal of exposed surface

debris (rocks, glass, concrete, macadam, construction debris, tree remnants) of any type, which contribute to a potential risk of injury.

- Proper application of an appropriate herbicide for the removal of any weed infestation – a selective broadleaf herbicide for broadleaf weeds and preservation of existing turfgrasses. In situations of very little or no turfgrasses, and/or a heavy infestation of weeds resistant to selective control, the application of a non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate would be appropriate.

- Fill-in holes and major depressions with high quality sandy loam topsoil. Smooth out rough surface areas, including the entire field if necessary with topdressing with a high quality sandy loam solid mixture.

- Cultivate by means of intensive core aeration to alleviate soil compaction.

- Apply lime if necessary in accordance with the results of soil test to correct soil acidity.

- Slit-seed with an appropriate slit-seeder capable of rotating blade penetration of at least one inch into the soil with a minimum width of two inches between blades. A wider spacing

of blades will necessitate double or triple slit seeding. Seed with a high quality turfgrass seed mixture or blend in accordance with Rutgers Extension Service FS 105. Turf-type perennial ryegrasses are a major consideration because of their rapid germination and establishment together with a high degree of wear tolerance.

- Drag with a flexible steel drag mat when dry and remove any surface debris.

- Apply fertilizer in accordance with the results of soil tests.

- Maintain satisfactory soil moisture if irrigation is available. In situations where irrigation is not available, the fall season would be the most desirable period for renovation.

- Mow as needed at a height of 2.5-3.0 inches at a frequency that will avoid clipping accumulation.

- Restrict use of the field until the new seeding has become strongly established and sufficiently mature to tolerate use without quick obliteration of the seeding of turfgrasses.

In situations where the restricted use of the field is in conflict with the demand for use of the field, a more rapid renovation procedure to reduce the period of restricted use is sodding.

Although more costly than seeding, sodding will substantially reduce the period of restricted use from 6-9 months for seeding to 4-6 weeks for sodding.

Sodding requires an increased effort in site preparation and the establishment of a new mature playing surface. Important considerations in the sodding procedure include the following steps:

- Removal of the existing vegetative growth (turfgrasses and weeds) from the area of concern by stripping with a sod cutter removing as little topsoil as possible remove and discard.

- Minor correction of deficiencies in grade with filling of major depressions with a high quality sand loam topsoil and/or light grading for a finish grade.

- Light tillage by means of aggressive core aeration to alleviate surface compaction and provide a more suitable solid environment to enhance rooting of the sod. The Aeravator is an effective aerifier, which can achieve this objective with a firm surface. Rototilling is not suitable from the standpoint that it will produce a very fluffy soft surface, which would require rolling or some other means of firming or proper installation of the sod.

- Apply lime (if required) and

Continued on page 18

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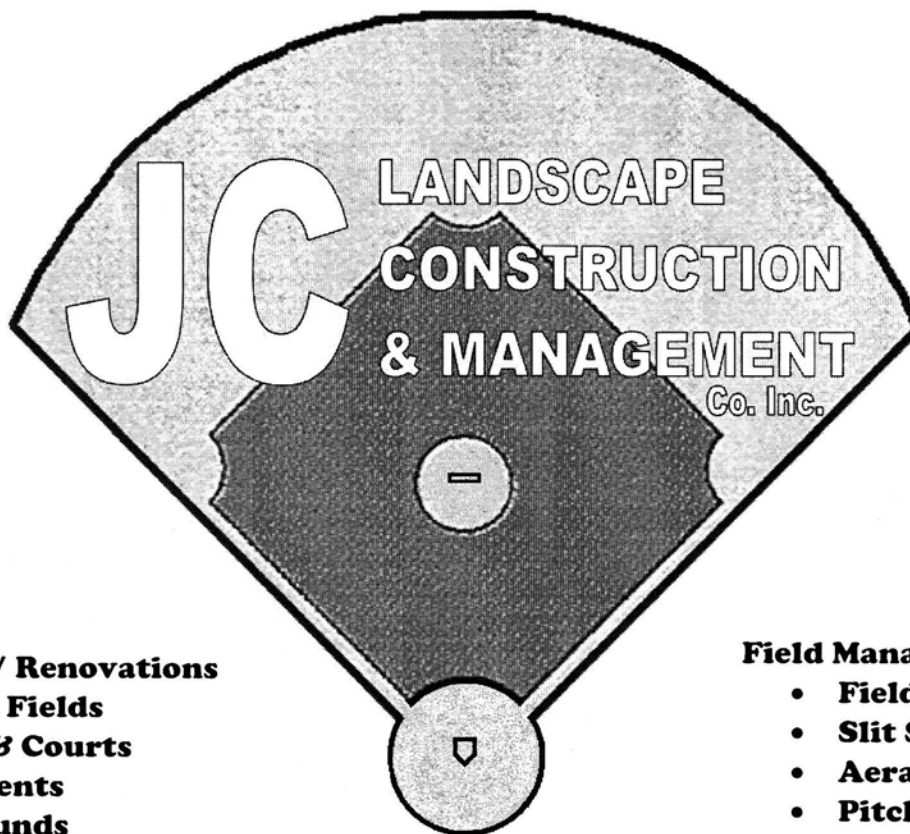
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Continued from page 16

fertilizer in accordance with the results of laboratory analyses on soil samples taken in preparation for the sodding procedure.

- Drag with a flexible steel drag mat and if the soil surface is dry lightly irrigate cautiously avoiding excessive wetness.

- Installation of a pre-selected high quality "Big Roll" sod containing a blend of improved cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass ore a mixture of improved cultivars of tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass (refer to FS 105 and FS 738). Sod should be delivered within 6 hours after harvest and installed within 6 hours after delivery.

- Sod should be placed in a manner to avoid overlapping of sod pieces with tight joints free of voids. Roll and irrigate immediately after installation. Maintain satisfactory soil moisture with frequent and light irrigation. Avoid excessive wetness, which can contribute to a variety of other problems. Immediately after installation of the sod and until the sod develops a new root system, the sod is very sensitive to soil moisture stress. Close monitoring of soil moisture during his sensitive period is very critical for the survival and establishment of the

sod.

- Renovation with sod should not be attempted without adequate provision for maintaining favorable soil moisture conditions.

- Mow at a height of 2.5-3.0 inches as soon as the topgrowth grows to a height of 4 inches and at a frequency to avoid clipping accumulation on the surface. The use of a lightweight walk-behind mower is preferred to a heavier riding mower.

In the sodding procedure, an alternate to the stripping of the vegetative growth with a sod cutter is the incorporation of this material into the soil. The vegetative growth can be incorporated in its green condition or after complete eradication with a non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate. The use of a Rota-Dairon is an effective means of achieving thorough incorporation (including surface stones) and a clean resultant soil surface. The resultant fluffy soft surface must be firmed with rolling to obtain the desirable firmness for sod installation.

The outlined Renovation Procedure by means of seeding or sodding is an effective means of restoration of a suitable natural turfgrass-playing surface for accommodating athletic activities. However, it is important to

understand that it is not a substitute for negligence in maintenance, abuse in use and/or drainage problems associated with deficiencies in construction. Furthermore, there are no miracle products and/or procedures in any maintenance program that can overcome or alleviate drainage problems. In addition, drainage conditions impact not only on the turfgrass growth and its sensitivity to destruction from athletic activities but also upon the safety and playability of the field. In situations where soil drainage is a major problem, consideration should be given to procedures for improvement. Substantial improvements in drainage conditions can be achieved without a complete destruction of an existing field by means of the installation of a sand/slit drainage system. A more costly and invasive procedure is complete reconstruction of the field with the proper installation of an internal soil drainage system. The most opportune and less costly time for providing satisfactory drainage would be during the initial construction of the field.

*Prof. Emeritus-Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management-Rutgers University sports Field Consultant- GSI Consultant/Turfccon, Somerset, N.J. ♦

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