

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Keep Your Fields In Shape For Fall Play?

Answered by David Mills, Parks Maintenance, City of Buhl (ID)

We don't generally have a lot of fall activity up here, but we do adjust our basic maintenance plan slightly for fall. Naturally, any major repairs will be done after the regular season ends. After that, we will keep up with our regular mowing schedule only we cut a little shorter. We will also apply our weed killer and a low nitrogen fertilizer to keep things "in shape" through the winter.

Answered by Dale Wysocki, Facility Supervisor, Minnesota Vikings Football Club

During the late summer-early autumn months, it becomes increasingly important to keep grass growing on our practice fields. Prior to each practice, from August 15 to September 15, we apply seed consisting of a 70% perennial ryegrass and 30% Kentucky bluegrass at the rate of 6 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. We allow the players to pound the seed in the soil during practices. After Friday's practice, the areas that are abused the most are seeded with 100% perennial ryegrass at 4 lbs. per 1,000 sq.ft. Then we aerify with a Ryan Greensaire and apply more perennial ryegrass at the same rate. Topdressing is applied and brushed in. We apply Milorganite at a rate of 1 lb. per 1,000 sq.ft. The secret to great seeding success is to always get the seed in contact with the soil.

As the season and the weather start to wane, 100% perennial ryegrass will be used in conjunction with the Evergreen covers. Since the weather in the upper mid-West can change at a moments notice, we are always prepared to remove snow from the field to facilitate the team's practice schedule.

This year, we will try a dormant seeding with a heavy application of Milorganite. The areas between the numbers will be covered with Evergreen covers.

Answered by Abby McNeal, Pleasant View Fields, Boulder, CO

"We" are myself and one other full-time employee -- so -- once our fall season has begun, we focus mainly on the maintenance of problem areas, such as the goal mouths, sidelines and centers of the fields. We currently maintain 7 soccer fields -- all sand based (next summer we'll have 9). At least once a week we're filling divots, repairing goal mouths, etc. If we need to, we'll re-sod with existing materials from elsewhere within the facility, and re-sand as needed. We will also schedule two fall fertilizer applications to our worn areas.

We've been pretty lucky in that, if we have a field that is badly damaged, we can often schedule play to another field, when not in use, and repair the damaged field.

Answered by Tim Moore, Park Manager, M-NCPPC, Montgomery County, MD

Getting ready for fall play is really a year-round process. The better the condition of fields going into the packed play schedule, the better they will hold up to the heavy use. We have 96 fields, none of them with in-ground irrigation systems. Our only window before fall football and soccer comes during the last week of August and the first week of September. We take advantage of this by aerating, overseeding with a combination of 70 percent turf-type fescue, 20 percent perennial ryegrass and 10 percent bluegrass, and fertilizing with our first pound of nitrogen. During the last week in October, while fall play is still in full swing, we apply another pound of nitrogen and aerate one more time. On our higher quality fields, during the last week of the season, we overseed with bluegrass and let the players cleat it in. Because the bluegrass has a hard seed coat, it remains dormant over the winter and is in place to start growth as soon as temperatures hit the proper range the next spring.

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