

How Do You Do...?

The question: How Do You "Put Your Fields to Bed" So They "Wake Up" Happy in the Spring?

Answered by Jay Warnick, CSFM; Seattle Seahawks (WA)

After a season of wear and compaction, our first priority in putting the field to bed is getting oxygen to the root zone. We accomplish this by core aerating at 3"x 5" spacing with fl" tines at a depth of 3" in one direction and 6"x 6" spacing with fl" tines at a 10" depth in the other direction. We remove as much of the core material as possible and allow the holes to remain open until spring top-dressing. We have noticed that by doing this our incidence of the slime mold diseases decreases. It is also important that we provide an easy channel for the constant rainfall to make its way through the organic buildup which has accumulated through the season.

After aerification we address any grade problems and divot fill (it seems easier to spot these areas while the canopy is on the thin side). Next, we aggressively rake in bluegrass seed in areas that have received the most abuse. Spring germination rates are not always great, but anything we do get gives us a jump on the early Spring practices.

Finally we make any irrigation adjustments and repairs so the system will be ready to go when Spring football approaches.

Answered by Dave Rulli, Jeffco Stadium, Lakewood, CO

Typically our high school football season ends mid to late November. We host 30 regular season games over a ten week period, plus play-off games in November. When the season ends, we core aerate the field in two directions to relieve compaction from the season. Then we apply ammonium sulfate at a rate of one pound of nitrogen per 1000 ft. The fertilizer application of ammonium sulfate promotes early green-up as well as available nutrients in early Spring for growth. Dormant seeding at a rate of 3 pounds per 1000 ft. with a blend of Kentucky Bluegrass is the next step in the process.

After seeding is complete, we topdress the field about 1/2" which fills in any depressions and helps reestablish our grade on the field. Topdressing also protects our dormant seeding process. Then we use a broom to drag the sand into the field going both directions. If needed, the field receives its final watering before going into winter. The final step is to cover the field with gro-covers and pray for a successful winter growing season!

Answered by Leo Goertz, Texas A & M University

Putting a bermudagrass field in the south to bed for the winter is like putting a two year old to bed. You don't know how long it will sleep or when it will wake up. At Texas A & M we have two different situations. Our sand-based fields can go dormant and turn green two or three different times over the course of the winter. Native soil fields will go dormant and stay dormant till spring warmup. Fields that are overseeded are verticut and aerified before they are seeded. Fields that are not overseeded are mowed all the way up till they turn brown. Two areas of concern with all of our fields is soil moisture and fertility. We make sure that the soils remain moist during the winter to prevent

winter kill. If the winter is dry, we do weekly light irrigation. As for fertility, we monitor tissue tests up till early November to make sure that there is plenty of nitrogen and potassium in the plant for spring green up. If needed we will lightly fertilize in late November, with a 2-1-2 ratio and no more than 3/8 pound per thousand square feet.

Answered by Randy Buchanan, Henrico County (VA) Parks & Rec.

We use our cultural practices to put our turf to sleep so it wakes up happy in the spring.

Fertility & cultivation practices allow the turfgrass to harden off for the winter. We prepare our Bermudagrass for dormancy by giving it a Potash application before it goes dormant and not over stimulating the Bermudagrass while trying to kick our Ryegrass into gear. We terminate our cultivation practices 6-8 weeks prior our overseeding date which is 4-6 weeks before our first killing frost date. We let our Bermudagrass wake in the spring and then do our first Bermuda fertilization two weeks after green up. We use turf blankets on Bermuda sod less than one year old and on special, high profile fields. We also use soil samples to balance our soils and utilize fertilizer as a source of organic nutrition.



A poor playing field
can be a nightmare.
So choose the

DREAM TEAM

POLYON TURFACE®

Harrell's
Custom Fertilizers Worldwide

...and get a
good night's rest.

Call your **Harrell's** rep
or call toll free 1-800-282-8007 (in FL)
1-866-245-5559 (in AL, GA, MS, LA and TN) 1-800-433-1550 (NC, SC and VA)
www.harrells.com