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## Welcome New & Renewed SFMANJ Members

Currently we have 361 members. In the beginning of November, SFMANJ mailed invoices for 2005 membership dues to all current members. If you did not receive an invoice, please contact us at (908) 730-7770 or download the 2005 membership form available at [www.sfmanj.org](http://www.sfmanj.org). Remember to mail your renewal/payment direct to SFMANJ, PO Box 370, Annandale, NJ 08801. ♦

Barcheski, Alex	Perth Amboy, City of
Borelli, Robert	GreenScapes Lawn Management LLC
Campbell, James	New Brunswick, City of
Fick, Daniel	Northern Nurseries
Hauck III, Lester	Monmouth University
Mecsey III, Joseph	Greenwich Township DPW
Moore, Tim	The Lawrenceville School
Perdun, Bud	North Brunswick Board of Ed.
Wagner, Leon R.	Middle Twp. Board of Education ♦

### SFMANJ Annual Membership Registration Form \* receive update information by email

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# 2005

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### Mission Statement

Committed to enhancing the professionalism of athletic field managers in New Jersey by improving the safety, playability and appearance of athletic fields at all levels through seminars, field days, publications and *networking* with those in the sports turf industry.

### Contact us at:

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### Did You Know?

*Turf requires 3/4 or an inch of water a week to replace water lost through transpiration and evaporation. ♦*

Continued from page 1

Jersey has been working closely with NJTA to ensure that all SFMANJ members receive pre-registration materials via U.S. mail. Make plans to attend ... you don't want to miss the new format!

### Rutgers Lawn, Landscape & Sports Turf Field Day Schedule

Rutgers Adelphia Research Farm, Adelphia, NJ  
Wednesday, August 3, 2005

7:00 am Vendor registration

7:30 am Attendee registration and Trade Show opening

9:00 am Rutgers turfgrass education

11:00 am Lunch and open Trade Show

12:00 pm Sports turf and lawn and landscape equipment demonstrations

2:00 pm Rutgers turfgrass education

3:00 pm Pesticide credits and adjournment

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\$60 (non-members) ►► contact info ►►

**Contact:** Michelle Rickard, Executive Director –  
New Jersey Turfgrass Association  
PO Box 340, Milltown, NJ 08850  
215-751-6582, fax: 732-741-6582

To obtain a copy of the pre-registration form for the Field Day, visit: [www.njturfgrass.org](http://www.njturfgrass.org) ♦

## A Thank You letter we received about the 2005 Spring Field Day

I just wanted to write you a note to congratulate you and your committee on conducting such a terrific Spring Field Day last week (April 6). As a person who not only has grown up on a sod farm and has operated one for the past 25 years, but as a Town Councilman who is responsible for the upkeep of parks, I learned a lot from the topics that were presented. Everything from some simple points to create a safe field to weed control and drainage was very practical. The afternoon session, which was hosted by the Betts family, was also exceptional.

Thanks again for having a well-attended, successful Field Day! I'm hopeful that in the future, as the membership grows, perhaps we can conduct a similar Field Day up here in District I. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. DeBuck, President

*Thank you Leonard for the kind words. Absolutely! We would love to host a tour at your sod farm for District I folks. Just name the date. Eleanor, President SFMANJ ♦*

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# Rutgers Corner – Utilizing and maintaining Kentucky bluegrass as a sports turf

By Brad Park, Rutgers University  
[park@aesop.rutgers.edu](mailto:park@aesop.rutgers.edu)

Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) is considered by many to be the “Cadillac” of cool season turfgrass species for use on sports fields in New Jersey and other areas of the United States with a similar climate. The establishment of Kentucky bluegrass from seed is relatively slow; as a result, Kentucky bluegrass turf is frequently established with sod. The aggressive rhizomes of Kentucky bluegrass spread rapidly and produce a dense, strongly knit sod. Improved varieties of Kentucky bluegrass can produce a hardy, persistent, and attractive turf. It is adapted to a wide range of soils and climates and its extensive rhizomes provide excellent survival and recuperative potential, making it a

popular choice for sports fields prone to wear damage. The discovery of ‘Merion’ by Joseph Valentine in the early 1930s greatly increased the usefulness of Kentucky bluegrass as a turf in regions with a humid temperate climate.

The purchase of certified seed from wholesale or retail outlets is strongly suggested. Certified seed is grown in fields inspected by a state-certifying agency for genetic purity, and also must meet standards established for germination and freedom from weeds and other crop seeds. Knowing the variety of seed in the container is important because it allows the buyer to select improved varieties that will produce higher quality turf under traffic with greater persistence and fewer

inputs. Seed that does not identify varieties or is described as variety-not-stated (VNS) presents a great risk to the buyer because the potential turf quality of the seed is unknown. The seed in a container labeled as ‘VNS’ could produce turf quality ranging from extremely poor to good.

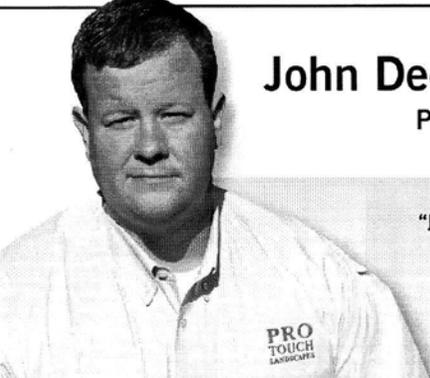
Seed blends of Kentucky bluegrass generally include three or more varieties. Blends of Kentucky bluegrass should be seeded at two to three pounds per 1000 square feet. Kentucky bluegrass is commonly mixed with tall fescue and/or perennial ryegrass to provide greater adaptability on turfs where environmental and management factors vary over the site. Such mixtures should consist of one or more Kentucky bluegrass varieties in combination with two or more varieties of the other species with the following standards (percentage by weight):

(Seed at 4 to 6 pounds per 1000ft<sup>2</sup>)

85	95%	Turf-type Tall fescue
5	15%	Kentucky bluegrass

(Seed at 3 to 5 pounds per 1000ft<sup>2</sup>)

*Continued on page 6*



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LANDSCAPES

Continued from page 5

80 - 95% Kentucky bluegrass

5 - 20% Perennial ryegrass

Mixtures including all three species are also used; however, such broad species mixtures have a greater likelihood of becoming non-uniform (clumpiness). Mixtures of all three species are more likely to be uniform when seed weight is greatest for tall fescue followed by Kentucky bluegrass, and least with perennial ryegrass. For information on specific Kentucky bluegrass variety recommendations based on Rutgers traffic tolerance research and a description of the classification system utilized to group Kentucky bluegrass types, see Rutgers Cooperative Extension publication FS 545, Kentucky Bluegrass Varieties for New Jersey Sports Fields ([www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/](http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/)).

Kentucky bluegrass is adapted to well-drained fertile soil of slight acidity (optimum pH of 6.5 to 6.7). A soil pH of 6.0 is recommended for Kentucky bluegrass sports fields suffering from summer patch disease. A moderate to high level of fertility will improve

persistence of Kentucky bluegrass grown on poor quality soil; however, the overall appearance will not be of high quality without measures taken to improve the soil. Mowing heights of 1½ to 2 inches can be used when Kentucky bluegrass is maintained with moderate levels of fertility and sufficient water under cool to warm environmental conditions. Mowing heights below 1½ inch are only recommended for sports fields where the demand for playability is very high and management inputs can be optimized for persistence under close mowing (high labor and inputs).

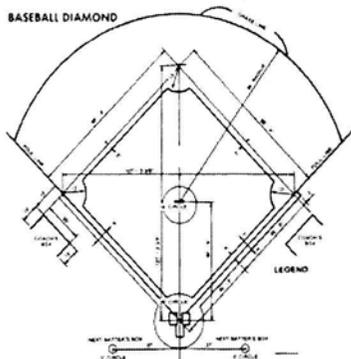
Annual nitrogen fertilization rates vary depending on the soil fertility, desired turf quality, and intensity of field use. Annual nitrogen rates range from 1 to 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of turf area. Higher annual nitrogen rates are needed for establishing turf or intensively trafficked sports fields where recovery from severe wear damage is necessary. Older turf where soil fertility has been built-up will generally require lower rates of nitrogen fertilization. Applying the majority of nitrogen fertilizer in late summer and early fall will improve density and health of the

turf better than spring application of fertilizer. For more information on fertilization of sports fields see Rutgers Cooperative Extension publication FS 105, Maintaining Athletic Fields ([www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/](http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/)).

Irrigation may be necessary under severe drought conditions to maintain green vigorous growth; however, a healthy Kentucky bluegrass will survive drought for many weeks by going dormant. Survival during drought-induced dormancy will be best if traffic, insects, or disease is not damaging the turf while the turf is dormant or entering dormancy (under drought stress). Kentucky bluegrass turf grown on shallow or poor quality soils will have a limited root and rhizome system and, therefore, less persistence under severe drought stress. More information on insects and diseases of turf can be found at [www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/](http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/pubs/) or your county Extension office.

#### Literature Cited

Murphy, J.A. and B.S. Park. 2004. Kentucky bluegrass varieties for New Jersey sports fields. Rutgers Coop. Ext. Pub. FS 545 ♦



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## Question/Answer "Murphy's Law"

Dr. James Murphy is an Associate Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management for Rutgers, department of Plant science.

Ask Dr. Murphy your questions: E-mail us at [hq@sfmanj.org](mailto:hq@sfmanj.org)

**Question:** The soccer fields in our area are currently dormant, brown and dry as a bone. If these conditions continue can permanent or excessive damage to the turf result from typical play on the fields?

**Answer:** Absolutely!

Dormant turf has very low vigor. Dormant turf has prepared itself to survive without water; but not to withstand intense traffic. Thus, the low vigor of the dormant turfgrass plants will only be able to tolerate a very limited amount of traffic.

Signs of severe damage include thin open turf and bare soil. The lower leaf sheaths and crowns of the turfgrass plants have been and will continue to be damaged once you start to see bare soil in the playing field. This is a serious

problem because regeneration of new healthy shoots and roots come from the crowns. Dead crowns translates into dead grass with no hope for recovery (I can not word it more bluntly)!

If you can still find crowns as a fresh, translucent green appearance, then the turf can recover. Dried up, brown crowns are severely damaged and have a high probability of being dead. Weed invasion is another problem with intense use (traffic) under dormant turf conditions. The dormant turf wears out very quickly with use. Once natural rains return or irrigation is applied, the dormant weed seeds in the soil have ample opportunity to germinate, emerge, and infest the field. Thus, you will likely observe greater weed problem on fields that receive significant play (use) under dormant conditions. ♦

## Field Tip Reality, What A Concept

by Jim Hermann, CSFM\*

• Reality is the difference between a state of the art utility vehicle that gums, carts and dumps and a 1980 pickup truck equipped with a length of chain link fence.

• Reality is the difference between a ten-man grounds crew for one field and a one-man grounds crew for ten fields.

• Reality is the difference between what works on paper and what works in the field.

• Reality is the difference between treating for crabgrass and being thankful the field is green.

In the realm of absolute right and absolute wrong, if your lucky, reality

*Continued on page 8*

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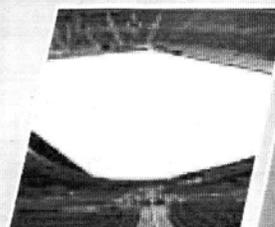
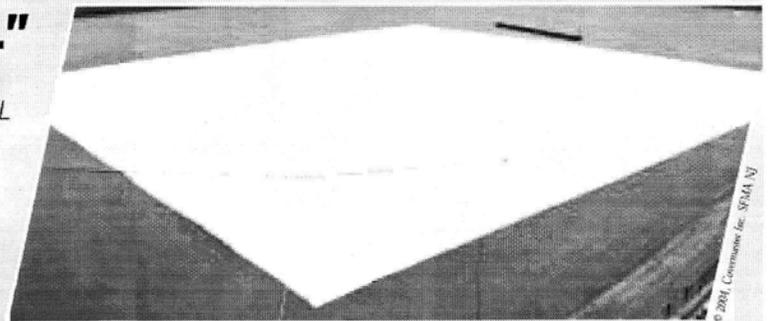
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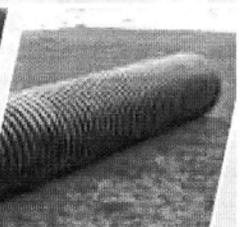
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lies somewhere in the middle.

Accepted yet never formally discussed, reality is the single most limiting factor in the management of every athletic field. Dealing with and understanding the effects and consequences of reality is a primary objective for every sports field manager. It is kind of like putting a round peg in a square hole and making it fit.

Reality should never be used as an excuse. A clear vision of what is ideal should always be maintained as a point of reference for what is real. In order to evaluate what we can do, it is important to know what we should do. Education is critical. Education is a like a road map. We are taught the most direct route. As sports field managers we learn to deal with roadblocks. We learn to get around obstacles. There is no such thing, as "I can't get there from here".

Sometimes we need to look at our objectives from a different perspective. I often times discuss selection of the proper infield mix. Ideally, selection of the proper infield mix should be based on an understanding of the physical analysis of that product and how different percentages of sand, silt and clay affect the characteristics of that product. In reality, selection of an acceptable mix is more often based on price. Therefore, a more realistic objective for the sports field manager would be to have the ability to recognize and understand the characteristics of the infield mix chosen, rather than the ability to choose a mix based on an understanding of its characteristics. The key point remains, an understanding of infield mixes.

We are all aware or should be aware that soil testing is critical if a quality turf is to be established and maintained. Unfortunately when recommendations are made based on soil test results; these recommendations vary from field to field. Ideally, each field should be treated precisely as the recommendations have prescribed. Realistically, you and I both know "that may not happen". Typically in a situation like this I would select a fertilizer formulation that addresses the needs of all the fields but may not provide the nutrients required by some fields in the total prescribed amount.

An agronomist once told me that

soil testing should be used as a means of determining soil fertility trends. These trends are determined by periodic testing on a yearly or biyearly schedule. What that means to me is that, within limits of acceptability, as long as the fertility of a field is headed in the right direction, I'm a happy camper. The education received on what is ideal has allowed for the ability to discern what is acceptable and real.

It was once said, "although the

primary objective may be to drain the swamp, it is sometimes difficult to remain focused when you are up to your butt in alligators". A clear vision of the objectives and the ability to prioritize applications and procedures is key in dealing with reality.

\*Jim Hermann, is a Certified Sports Field Manager and serves on the Board of Directors of SFMANJ and is President of Total Control Athletic Field Management. ♦

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## Recruiting and Coordinating Volunteer Efforts to Maintain Public Sports Fields

by Dr. Richard G Caton\*

The United States is in the grip of a growing dilemma surrounding the demand by the public for space to carry on athletic activities. In almost every community across the country we see desperate struggles between those who desire to use athletic fields and those who control and maintain the available facilities. We simply have more requests for athletic field use than can be accommodated in any kind of sensible fashion.

When we say "sensible fashion" we refer to the prudent use of a particular facility that allows for the field to be taken out of play periodically so that cultural practices can be employed to keep the fields in good condition so that play can be carried on in a relatively safe environment. Mowing, fertilizing, controlling weeds and other pests, grooming, raking core aeration, is dictated by Mother Nature and kept on

a clock that had not changed since the dawn of life on this planet.

Turfgrass – you see, that wonderful natural cushion that athletes of all ages and all skill levels crave, provides the finest and safest playing surface. However, it requires constant care to maintain it in a healthy condition and this care requires sufficient manpower, equipment, and materials to properly do the job.

Now, however, we add the vicious paradox or as Shakespeare said "the unkindest cut of all". At a time when we have the greatest need for improving our programs by providing more fields, and better maintenance to accommodate demand (all of which take increased funding and increased maintenance), we see budget reductions. A dilemma indeed!

The question is – "What can I do given this woeful scenario, to improve conditions and to somehow stem the tide toward total destruction of our athletic

fields, hence our programs?"

Providing for proper maintenance requires a commitment to generate adequate funds for the aforementioned manpower, equipment, and materials; - volunteerism, properly organized and managed, can contribute significantly to offset the demand for increased funding.

A major problem for most Boards of Control and administrators is providing adequate maintenance which ever dwindling funds. The areas of field grooming, mowing, and a variety of other tasks lend themselves well to volunteerism, which is a viable means of meeting basic maintenance requirements without "breaking the bank".

The establishment of such a program is fundamentally based on communication. People don't know about things until they are told and they can't give you something until you tell them what you want. Such programs, by the way, are not new. They just aren't widely known or utilized.

The following is a brief outline on how to get started with a volunteer program to provide manpower and financial assistance to ailing programs:

I. Clearly define the problem and communicate verbally and in writing to the citizenry. Develop slide shows or videotapes to illustrate the problem and take groups to visit fields that need "a friend".

II. Clearly define your manpower and monetary deficiencies and do so in an easy to understand format field by field. Be sure that in each instance you list the materials, equipment, and services that the Board of Control can provide and the kinds of assistance you seek.

III. Give your program a name (acronyms work best), for example: ROBIN – Retired Old Buddy Is Needed, or RSVP – Retired Senior Volunteer Program. The program should not be completely aimed at the local cadre of retirees. For example, the local Boy and Girl Scouts, YM or YWCA's, civic groups (Kiwanis, Jaycees, Lions, Elks, American Legion, etc.) can be of great assistance through contribution/solicitation of funds and/or manpower.

*Continued on page 10*

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An acronym for the scouts might be SCATTR – Scouts Come Again To The Rescue.

IV. Development of group leaders – Provide hands-on training programs particularly for group leaders.

V. Be sure to get “Moms” involved. There is no stronger force on earth than a mother’s desire to provide for her children. PTA’s and other parents groups and women’s auxiliaries of various organizations provide a powerful source of assistance and leadership in all such endeavors.

VI. Start with just one field. Some refer to it as the “Adopt a Field” Program or other catch phrases. Be sure that you know exactly what kind of assistance you need. Work out the timing involved and assign clear responsibilities and the aforementioned training to group leaders.

VII. Develop a short contract showing some minimal formalization of the agreement to help and have “save/harmless” clause in it to protect the Board of Control in the event of accident or injury. Be sure assignees have their own insurance coverage and are willing to assume certain risks.

VIII. Widely publicize early successes and praise the volunteer efforts

with pictures of improvements and estimates of savings to the community. Refer to individuals and organizations by name.

IX. Give all volunteers, both individuals and groups, distinguished status within the community by providing identification cards that give them “free” access to all games, concerts, or special events for which one otherwise would have to pay admission.

X. After the program is in “high gear” so to speak, get donations and volunteer assistance to provide an annual dinner for all volunteers. As a special feature of the event give awards for various categories, i.e. most hours logged by and individual, largest single financial contribution, most innovative idea introduced, field most dramatically improved (use before and after pictures, etc.) and other kinds of incentives to encourage increased participation and a sense of satisfaction and belonging to those actively engaged in the program. Be sure all community dignitaries are present and offer words of gratitude.

XI. Publicize and communicate everything to the end that the program is recognized as an indispensable part of the fabric of the community.

XII. After a time, seek to have the group become more self-sustaining by election of officers from within the group to provide leadership and inspiration to the group, with community officials acting as resource people as opposed to occupying leadership roles.

To reiterate a point, remember that individuals and groups can only give what they know you need. To accomplish this, you must “reach out” to them. We live in the most dynamic country in the world and one which repeatedly gives and gives to help each other and to provide relief around the world in time of crisis.

We have a crisis in America. Our athletic fields are not sufficient in numbers or in quality to support the programs and expectations of our citizens. We must do something about it. Volunteerism can provide significant relief to the “public purse”. Perhaps it’s time you tried it.

I sincerely hope that the thoughts and ideas offered herein will be of some assistance.

\*Dr. Richard G. Caton “Doc”, recently retired, served as the Executive Director of New Jersey Turfgrass Association since 1993. ♦

---

## Renovation of Athletic Fields

---

by Dr. Henry W. Inkyk\*

Natural turfgrass athletic fields provide not only an aesthetically pleasing and attractive appearance but also more importantly a high quality dense resilient playing surface as a cushion for accommodating athletic activities. Intense use of natural turf athletic fields

can severely impact on the suitability of the playing surface. Symptoms of intense use are reflected in severe wear, loss of density, resiliency and cushion. Additionally, the soil may become severely compacted and the surface pocketed with footprints. Under such conditions, the increased potential for athlete injury and impact on playability

are of major concern.

The degree of sensitivity of the playing surface to athletic activities is closely associated with a variety of factors closely associated with turfgrass growth. Included among the major factors are the following:

- Intense use above and beyond the wear tolerance of the specific turfgrasses.
- Uncontrolled or lack of supervised use particularly under adverse soil and weather conditions.
- Deficiencies in construction procedures particularly with respect to proper soil drainage.
- Absence of a well-planned maintenance program directed toward the most favorable conditions for turf grass growth and persistence performed effectively and timely.
- Acidic and/or low fertility soils.
- Appropriate and proper diagnosis and timely treatment (if required) of weeds, insects and/or diseases.
- Delay in repair until relatively complete obliteration of the playing surface rather than at an early stage of turfgrass damage.

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