UPDATE

September/October, 2006 • Vol. 6, No. 5 e-mail: hq@sfmanj.org • www.sfmanj.org



MONMOUTH PARK TURF RACE NAMED IN HONOR OF DR. HENRY INDYK

Brad Park*

On Wednesday afternoon, August 23, 2006, Monmouth Park Racetrack, Oceanport, NJ recognized the late Dr. Henry Indyk for the agronomic help he provided the track over the years in the management of the turf course.

The seventh race was a one mile and one sixteenth race over the Monmouth Park turf course and listed in the program as, "IN MEMORY OF DR. HENRY W. INDYK". Mary Indyk (wife) and Ken Indyk (son) were on-hand to watch the race as well as present a trophy to the winning jockey.

Dr. Indyk passed away last September at the age of 84. He taught at Rutgers Cook College for more than 30 years and became Professor Emeritus of Turfgrass Science in 1990. Among his many achievements was the establishment of the New Jersey Turfgrass Expo as well as creation of the Sports Turf Managers Association's (STMA) Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM) program.

A special thanks goes out to Bob Juliano, Director of Facilities, Monmouth Park Racetrack for arranging this tribute to Dr. Indyk.

> *Brad Park is Sports Turf Res. and Ed. Coor., Rutgers University; SFMANJ Board Member; and Editor, SFMANJ Update



A trophy was presented to the jockey of the winning horse in a race dedicated to Dr. Henry W. Indyk at Monmouth Park Racetrack, Oceanport, NJ on August 23, 2006. Pictured (l-r): Timothy Hills, owner/trainer of winning horse; Charles C. Lopez, jockey that rode winning horse; Mary Indyk, wife of Dr. Indyk; Ken Indyk, son of Dr. Indyk.



Monmouth Park Racetrack paid tribute to Dr. Indyk by naming a turf race in his honor and utilizing the infield tote board to personally thank Henry for all the help he provided the trace over the years.



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National Organization Sports Turf Managers Association

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This newsletter is the official bi-monthly publication of the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey.

For information regarding this newsletter, contact: SFMANJ at (908) 730-7770 or Brad Park at (732) 932-9711, x127

Editor Brad Park, Rutgers University Email: park@aesop.rutgers.edu

SFMANJ does not necessarily support the opinions of those reflected in the following articles.

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How to Convince Your Employer to Send You to Expo 2006

Brad Park*

(Editor's note: This article was adapted from materials provided by Sports Turf Managers Association)

It's time to begin planning your trip to Expo 2006. The New Jersey Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2006 will be held at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, NJ on December 5-7, 2006. How can you convince your employer to send you?

Continuing education and industry connections are crucial to your success and the success of your sports fields. Here are some suggestions to help your employer understand how your attendance at Expo 2006 can add value to the overall operation of your facility.

Educate yourself on the Conference and Exhibition

- Provide an overview of the size and scope of Expo 2006. It may be helpful to give your employer a copy of the brochure. This edition of *SFMANJ Update* provides the Sports Field Managers Program for Expo 2006.
- Pinpoint specific sessions you plan to attend, and tie their relevance to your sports facility. As part of the Sports Field Managers Program, School IPM will be featured on the afternoon of Tuesday, December 5. A representative from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) will be speaking and taking questions on the specifics of the current NJ School IPM Law followed by a panel of three NJ sports field managers who have implemented school IPM programs at their facilities.
- Highlight the trade show and cite suppliers and equipment manufacturers you plan to meet.
- Discuss the networking opportunities you will have with peers who share challenges similar to the ones you have.
- Note that NJ DEP pesticide recertification credits will be available.
- Explain how innovations in products, new research, and cutting edge management techniques continually change, and why it is important to stay abreast of those changes.
- Reinforce how the success of your sports fields ultimately depends upon the continued professional development of you and your staff.

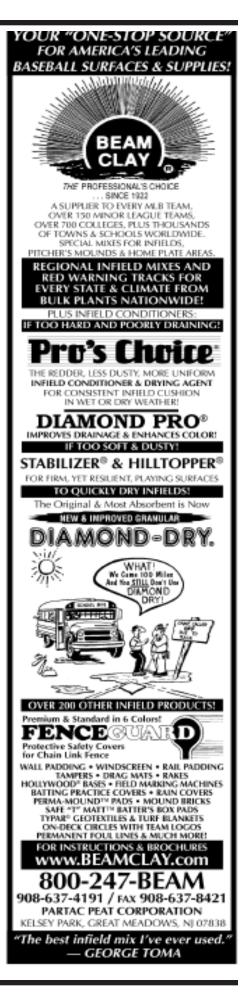
Know the Cost

- Make a case for efficient and effective use of your facility's training dollars. By attending Expo 2006, you will be exposed to the most relevant education and technology in one place, making it the most effective use of training dollars.
- Research travel times and hotel costs. While Atlantic City is a feasible day trip from almost anywhere in New Jersey, the New Jersey Turfgrass Association does its part to negotiate reasonable room rates at the Trump Taj Mahal to make staying a night reasonable. Expo 2006 will feature online registration at www.njturfgrass.org

Have an Action Plan

- Develop a plan for how operations will continue in your absence. Make sure you
 are accessible by phone or by page to address any concerns that might arise in
 your absence.
- Consider preparing and presenting a report on the information you learned and how you plan to put it into practice at your facility.
- Demonstrate how you will share the technical information learned with your staff for their continuing educational development.

* Brad Park is Sports Turf Res. and Ed. Coor., Rutgers Univ.; SFMANJ Board Member; and Editor, SFMANJ Update



Expo 2006:

New Jersey Turfgrass Industry Unites in an Historical Joint Venture

New Jersey Turfgrass Association Press Release

Two prominent New Jersey Associations, the NJ Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA) and the NJ Turfgrass Association (NJTA), have signed an historical, long-term agreement which will benefit green industry representatives across New Jersey and the region. The two associations have agreed on a joint venture to co-host the New Jersey Green Industry Expo.

For over 35 years, NJTA has run a very successful annual trade show and conference in early December. By joining efforts and resources, growth and expansion of the show is virtually guaranteed. "NJTA is excited about the opportunities this partnership will offer and believes the Expo will develop into a regional conference and trade show attracting attendees from up and down the East Coast," says Chris Carson, President of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association.

Beginning December 5-7 of this year the show will be renamed the "Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo". It will remain at the Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, NJ. The confer-

ence has always had well attended educational seminars and will continue to expand on this success by adding seminars earmarked specifically for the landscape contractor.

"This joint venture will be the perfect vehicle for NJLCA to further develop the southern regions of the state," states Brian Phiefer, NJLCA President. He also announced the first annual NJLCA state convention, the Holiday Awards Dinner and the 40th Anniversary Celebration will be held at Expo.

"This partnership is exactly what the Expo needed to catapult it to new heights. We are certain it will benefit the entire Green Industry in New Jersey and we look forward to producing another first-rate Expo," says Chris Carson, NJTA President.

NJTA will feature online registration for Expo 2006. For more information visit www.njturfgrass.org or call: (215) 757-6582

New Jersey Turf & Landscape Conference and Expo 2006: Sports Field Managers Program

December 5-7, 2006 Trump Taj Mahal Casino-Resort, Atlantic City, NJ

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2006 TUESDAY AM

Principles of sports field drainage

Dr. Jim Murphy, Rutgers Univ.

Effective pesticide applications

with backpack sprayers Dr. John Grande, Rutgers Univ. 10:00 Cost comparisons between natural grass and synthetic infill fields Dr. A.J. Powell, University of Kentucky

10:45 A synthetic infill field: One year later Joel Taylor, Haddonfield Twp, NJ

11:15 Managing sports fields on native soils

Dr. A.J. Powell, University of

Kentucky

12:00 End of Session

9:00

9:30

TUESDAY PM

1:00 IPM procedures for turfgrass

Brad Park, Rutgers Univ.

1:30 IPM procedures for indoor facilities

	Dr. George Hamilton, Rutgers Univ.
2:00	Break
2:15	School IPM Q&A with the NJ DEP
	Bruce Reimbold, New Jersey Dept. of
	Environmental Protection
2:45	Case study panel:
	Implementing a school IPM program
	Moderator: Craig Tolley, County
	College of Morris, NJ
	Rich Watson, Pine Hill Schools, NJ

Central, NJ George Van Haasteren, Dwight Englewood Schools, NJ

Barry Imboden, Hunterdon

4:00 End of Session

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2006 WEDNESDAY AM

7:30 Early Bird sports field managers networking roundtable

9:00 End of Session

WEDNESDAY PM

1:00 SFMANJ Business meeting

1:30 Identifying and controlling common turfgrass diseases of sports fields Rich Buckley, Rutgers Univ.

2:00 Overview of the Certified Sports
Field Manager (CSFM) program
Don Savard, CSFM, Salesianum School

2:30 Managing infield skin surfaces
Ryan Radcliffe, Lakewood Blueclaws

3:00 Insect management update for sports fields

Dr. Albrecht Koppenhoffer, Rutgers

5

3:30 End of Session

SFMANJ STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE

A \$500 SFMANJ Student Scholarship will be awarded at Expo 2006 in Atlantic City (December 5-7, 2006). To apply, email or send via US Mail a 500-word essay on "Why you deserve this scholarship." The student must be a member of SFMANJ in good standing. Applications are due by Friday, October 27, 2006. Please include:

- 1. Name, address, email
- 2. Your declared major and grade point average
- 3. Classes, seminars or field days you have attended concerning sports field management
- 4. Accomplishments concerning the turf industry
- 5. Internships
- 6. Plan for the future

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SFMANJ Field of the Year Contest 2006

ENTERING is easy, send to:

SFMANJ Contest, Po Box 370 Annandale, NJ 08801

Entries must be received by September 30, 2006

ELLIGIBILITY:

- Two categories; School or Parks/Recreation fields only
- Current member of SFMANJ
- Natural grass fields only



SEND:

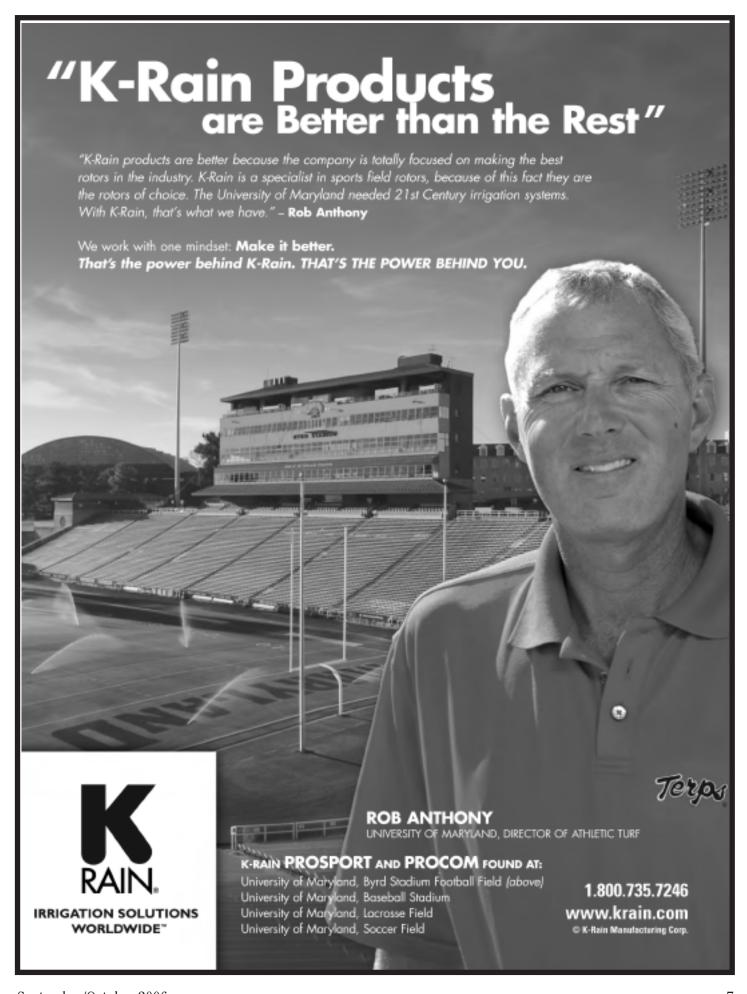
- Color photos of your natural grass field (10 maximum)
- Name of facility and location
- Name of owner
- Your name, position, and contact number

CRITERIA for awards:

- Playability and appearance of the playing surfaces
- Based on photos and a site visit by the SFMANJ Awards Committee
- Feel free to have sports groups in your photo

AWARDS:

Winners will be honored with a plaque at New Jersey Turfgrass Expo 2006 (December 5-7, 2006) and be interviewed for a feature article in SFMANJ Update newsletter (also receive a two-night stay at Taj Mahal, Atlantic City and three days of education).



September/October 2006 7

Rutgers Corner -

Broadleaf Weed Control in Cool Season Turfgrass

Dr. Steve Hart*

Editor's Note: This article, along with information related to the effectiveness of herbicide active ingredients on specific broadleaf weeds, can be accessed as a Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension Fact Sheet (FS385) at www.rcre.rutgers.edu/pubs

The presence of broadleaf weeds not only reduces the aesthetic quality of the turf, but more importantly they compete with the desired turfgrass for water, nutrients, and light. Failure to control these weeds often results in a deterioration of the turfgrass stand over time. Broadleaf weed infestations are often symptomatic of a more basic cultural or soil problem in many cases. If these problems persist, weeds also will be a continuous problem. Thus, a sound weed management strategy not only includes removal of existing weeds, but also using corrective management measures for the factors causing poor quality turfgrass.

Cultural Control of Broadleaf Weeds

The numbers and types of broadleaf weeds found in turfgrass are greatly influenced by management and cultural practices. For example, close mowing and too little nitrogen favor white clover. Close mowing also favors weeds such as carpetweed, spurge, plantains, and dandelion. Poorly drained areas favor weeds such as ground ivy, while compacted sites favor knotweed and plantains.

Correcting improper management practices to maintain a dense, vigorous turf is the best and most lasting method for broadleaf weed control.

Of particular importance are proper fertilization, mowing, and watering. Several broadleaf weed species cannot be satisfactorily controlled with proper use of herbicides, further increasing the importance of proper cultural management to reduce the opportunity for their establishment and spread.

Herbicides should be considered an aid, but not a cure, for broadleaf weed problems in landscaped turf.

Chemical Control of Broadleaf Weeds

In turf where broadleaf weeds have become a problem, application of an effective herbicide may be necessary for their removal so that the turf can be improved through better management and cultural practices. Several herbicides are available for broadleaf weed control, but weeds vary in response to different products. Thus, proper identification of the weeds is essential before the most economical and effective herbicide is selected. Suggested resources for weed identification include "Weeds of the Northeast" by Richard H. Uva, Joseph C. Neal, and Joseph M. Ditomaso available through Comstock Publishing Associates (a division of Cornell University Press). Also, two web sites can be accessed at www.rce.rut-gers.edu/weeds and www.rce.rut-gers.edu/weeds and www.rce.rut-gers.edu/weeds and www.rce.rut-gers.edu/weeds and www.rce.rut-gers.edu/~turf, then click on turfgrass weeds

(continued on page 9)

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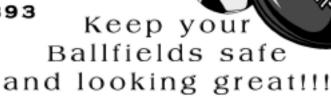
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Rutgers Corner (continued from page 8)

Two or more different herbicides are frequently sold as prepackaged mixtures. Most of the materials discussed are sold by several manufacturers, often under different trade names differing in formulation and concentration. Therefore, no rates are presented here. READ and FOLLOW carefully the label directions on the herbicide container. Applying rates too low may result in inadequate control, while applying rates too high may cause turfgrass injury. The following herbicides are available for the selective removal of broadleaf weeds from cool season turfgrasses.

2,4-D is the oldest and most widely used herbicide and provides broad spectrum weed control in turfgrass. This chemical is particularly effective for control of weeds with taproots such as dandelion, broadleaf plantain, mustards, and shepherd's purse. Amine formulations are most commonly used. However, the low volatile ester form of 2,4-D is often recommended for control of wild garlic and wild onion. Some weeds not controlled well by 2,4-D are white clover, chickweed, purslane, and ground ivy.

MCPA is chemically-related to 2,4-D and may be used as a substitute for 2,4-D in prepackaged mixtures. MCPA is not a broad spectrum herbicide as is 2,4-D and its use

alone (i.e., not mixed with another herbicide) is not usually recommended.

MCPP is most effective in the control of several perennial or winter annual weeds such as chickweed and clovers.

Dicamba controls many different weeds, several of them are not easily controlled by 2,4-D or MCPP. Of particular importance are the summer annual weeds that have a prostrate growth habit, including knotweed, purslane, and spurge. Dicamba however, does not control plantains.

Dichlorprop (2,4-DP) and Triclopyr are sold in prepackaged mixtures with 2,4-D and provide broad spectrum weed control.

Triclopyr + Clopyralid is a non-phenoxy, prepackaged mixture sold only under the trade name of Confront. This mix also provides broad spectrum control of many common

broadleaf weeds including oxalis. Clopyralid is now available alone under the trade name of Lontrel. Recently, several companies have started to sell herbicide combinations containing triclopyr and/or clopyralid.

Isoxaben is sold only under the trade name of Gallery, and is used primarily in the early fall for preemergence control of numerous winter annuals (especially henbit and common chickweed) and some perennial broadleaf weeds. It has no postermergence activity on emerged broadleaf weeds. Delay over-seeding for at least 60 days following application.

Quinclorac is sold only under the trade name of Drive. It effectively controls a few broadleaf weed species including white clover and corn speedwell, but the primary use of quinclorac will be for postemergence crabgrass control.

Chlorsulfuron and Metsulfuron are sold under the trade names of Corsair and Manor, respectively. Both herbicides are labeled for use (in some cases as a spot treatment only)

on a limited number of cool season turf species (primarily Kentucky bluegrass). Both herbicides will kill perennial ryegrass and chlorsulfuron will kill tall fescue.

Carfentrazone is a quick acting herbicide that will cause rapid desiccation of the foliage of many broadleaf weed species. It will only be sold in combination with other herbicides such as 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba.

(continued on page 10)



Rutgers Corner (continued from page 9)

Herbicide Mixtures

The use of mixtures of the above-mentioned herbicides is very common. Combination products result in the control of a broader range of weeds than single herbicides. Some herbicide mixtures may effectively control certain weeds that cannot be easily controlled by the individual herbicides used alone. Some commonly used herbicide mixtures are: 2,4-D + MCPP; 2,4-D + dicamba; 2,4-D (or MCPA) + MCPP + dicamba; 2,4-D + dichlorprop; 2,4-D + triclopyr and clopyralid + triclopyr. These herbicides will successfully control many broadleaf weeds found in cool season turf. The best times of year to control most broadleaf weeds are fall (especially late September) or spring (especially May).

To use these herbicides effectively for broadleaf weed control in turf, remember several points:

- 1. READ and FOLLOW the label directions CAREFULLY.
- 2. Spray when the temperature is above 70°F and the weeds are actively growing. Do not spray when the temperature is over 85°F because turfgrass injury may result and some of these products (i.e., low volatile esters) are prone to volatilization causing injury to nearby ornamental plants.
- 3. Treat only when soil is moist and plants are growing vigorously. Do not apply herbicides during drought periods or when soil is dry.
- 4. Do not mow one day prior to and after spraying.
- 5. Spray formulations (i.e. liquids) are generally more effective than granular forms of broadleaf herbicides, but granular products are easier to handle and apply, especially for homeowners.
- Apply granular formulations when the foliage is moist, during early morning hours when there is a heavy dew.

Precautions for Using Broadleaf Herbicides

1. Ornamental plants, trees, shrubs, and vegetables can be susceptible to these chemicals. Do not spray around homes and gardens when there

- is a wind. Even a slight breeze is likely to carry spray droplets to susceptible ornamental and garden plants. Ester formulations (even low-volatile types) are volatile and are therefore more likely to injure nearby ornamentals and vegetables when sprayed at high temperatures.
- 2. Dicamba is included in many herbicide combination products and also in some weed and feed (fertilizer-herbicide) combinations. This chemical and other broadleaf herbicides move readily in some soil types and can be absorbed by plant roots. Therefore, products containing dicamba in particular should not be used near the drip-line of trees or near ornamentals where it can be absorbed by roots.
- 3. Do not use any of these herbicides on newly-seeded turf. Wait until the new lawn has been mowed at least three times before treating (usually about 6 to 8 weeks after seedling emergence).
- 4. The herbicides listed in this publication are safe to use on established tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and fine-leaf fescues (i.e., strong creeping red, hard, Chewings, blue and sheep). All herbicides have the potential to cause some foliar yellowing. Do not use 2,4-D on turf where bentgrasses or roughstalk bluegrass are considered desirable species.
- 5. Thoroughly clean the sprayer tank, hose, and boom after using herbicides. One sprayer should be used for turf and another for spraying ornamentals. Do not allow spray mixtures to spill or leak onto areas where they can be taken up by foliage, roots of trees, or ornamentals.
- 6. Keep herbicide containers closed, properly labeled, and safely stored.
- 7. Always store a pesticide in its original container.
 - * Dr. Steve Hart is Extension Specialist in Weed Science, Rutgers University



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Dr. Henry W. Indyk Graduate Fellowship in Turfgrass Science

As many of you know, the turfgrass industry lost a dear friend and colleague in September 2005. We will all miss Henry very much and would like to insure that his legacy lives on. The Indyk family would like to establish a memorial fellowship to support graduate students interested in applied turfgrass science. This fellowship is being created to help assure that tomorrow's graduate students have the financial resources to get an advanced degree in turfgrass science at Rutgers University. To fund a full graduate assistantship each year in Henry's name, we will need to raise a total of \$400,000. Your generous support at this time will bring us closer to reaching this goal.

To make a tax-deductible contribution today, please send a check payable to the Rutgers University Foundation, 7 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901. Be sure to indicate "Indyk Fellowship, Turfgrass" in the memo portion of your check. If you desire, you may provide a donation in the form of a pledge payable over several years.

For information on other ways to support this fellowship, please contact Dr. Bruce B. Clarke, Director – Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science (732-932-9400, ext. 331; or clarke@aesop.rutgers.edu) or John Pearson, Director of Leadership Gifts at the Foundation, by calling (732) 932-7899 or email: pearson@winants.rutgers.edu



Celebrity Status - Nicole Sherry, Head Groundskeeper of the Trenton Thunder and SFMANJ Update contributor signs autographs as part of Nicole Sherry Bobblehead Night at Waterfront Park, Trenton, NJ on August 23, 2006.

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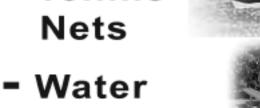
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They're off! - A seven horse field breaks from the starting gate on the turf course at Monmouth Park Racetrack on August 23, 2006 in a race named in Memory of Dr. Henry W. Indyk.



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SELECTION OF TOPDRESSING MATERIALS

Jim Hermann, CSFM*

In order to have a successful topdressing program, it is essential to choose the right topdressing material for the job. Soils can vary from very fine, heavy textured clayey soils to very coarse, light textured sandy soils, depending on the location. Therefore, the same topdressing material may have different results on different locations.

It is important to know the texture of the soil in your root zone. A physical analysis of your soil will give you this information. Most soil testing laboratories provide this service.

In addition to the proportions of sand, silt and clay in a soil, the coarseness or fineness of the sand portion, has an effect on the physical properties of a specific classification of soil. Medium size sand with a relatively consistent particle size usually has a higher rate of hydraulic conductivity than a material containing a more diverse blend of coarse, medium and fine particles. A principle to remember; water will move from a coarser textured soil to a finer textured soil more readily than the other way around, providing there is adequate pore space between the particles.

When using any material to modify an existing root zone, adequate cultivation is necessary to insure proper incorporation of the material. The more a topdressing material varies from the existing root zone in relation to its texture classification and physical properties, the more cultivation is typically needed. Without adequate cultivation there remains a very real potential for layering in the soil. Anytime there is a layer created in the soil, the interface between the layers will have the potential to negatively affect hydraulic conductivity, root penetration and even air and gas exchange characteristics of the soil.

Before you can determine the proper topdressing material to use, it is important to determine why you are topdressing. A few reasons for topdressing are: 1) Modification of existing root zone (Increase water conductivity; Increase organic matter content; Increase tilth; Increase Cation Exchange Capacity [CEC]); 2) Increase success rate of renovation thru improved soil seed contact; 3) Smooth a rough uneven surface

Two common materials used to modify a root zone are organic materials (in the form of compost) and sand. Caution must be practiced with either material.

Sand is sometimes used to improve the drainage characteristics of a heavy textured clayey soil. A heavy textured soil should reach approximately 85% sand by weight to have a positive effect on hydraulic conductivity. Medium to coarse size sand should be used for this purpose. A steady supply of a uniform material, which conforms to very specific guidelines, should be consistently available. Variations in material uniformity can void the success of the most well planned program. An agronomist can best prescribe these specifications.

Leaf compost is being used more and more to topdress athletic fields. Production by private and public recycling plants alike has made it a widely available material. It is sometimes blended with sand and sold as organic topsoil. The benefit to incorporating compost into the root zone is realized through the addition of organic matter. The addition of organic matter can provide a number of benefits. In a light sandy soil, organic matter can be of benefit by increasing the ability of the soil to retain moisture. This increase can combat compaction and maximize irrigation efficiency. The incorporation of organic matter into a soil adds essential plant nutrients. Depending on the source of the organic matter, this "fertilizer effect" can be substantial and could replace one or more applications in a fertilization program. Organic matter can

also increase CEC or the ability of a soil to retain nutrients. This increase in not usually necessary with heavy textured clay soils but may be of benefit in sandy soils. Note that it takes a tremendous amount of organic matter to increase soil CEC. Thus, in most situations the benefit of incorporating organic matter is more a result of increase water retention and nutrient addition, than increase in CEC.

The addition of organic matter can decrease the compactive tendencies of a soil and over time help to improve the soil structure (tilth) of a heavy textured soil. Tilth can be associated with the soft, fluffy texture of a well-maintained garden soil. A lack of tilth can be associated with the hard clumpy soil of a goalmouth. The benefits of organic matter can be realized in all areas of an athletic field but more noticeably in high traffic areas where existing soil structure has been destroyed.

Once soil structure is destroyed the ability of the soil to drain and maintain turf cover is severely compromised. The result is a weed-infested area of high compaction. A major cause of this destruction is playing games in wet water logged conditions where the soil is actually smeared under the stress of heavy foot traffic.

Similar materials to leaf compost are biosolids such as sewage sludge and spent mushroom compost. These materials are much the same as leaf compost in that they have high organic content but many have the added benefit of higher nutrient availability and therefore the potential for a greater "fertilizer effect".

As with any topdressing material, care must be taken when acquiring and applying compost. A quality compost material should be adequately aged prior to purchase and be properly screened to eliminate all twigs and debris. It should show no resemblance to its original components and have a clean earthy odor.

The results of a compost analysis report should be requested prior to purchase. These results should supply a minimum of pH, % organic matter, soluble salt levels, heavy metal levels and the Carbon:Nitrogen (C:N) ratio. Included with these test results, should also be a reference made to the acceptable levels of soluble salts and heavy metals. If the compost is a blended material it should also carry a physical (sand, silt, clay) analysis and have a texture classification such as loamy sand, sandy loam etc. A chemical analysis is also useful in determining the potential "fertilizer effect" of a topdressing material.

The C:N ratio is used as a barometer to measure the level of decomposition and should be less than 30:1. Higher C:N ratios can cause nitrogen supplies in the soil to become temporarily unavailable to the turf until the C:N ratio is reduced through further decomposition. This can have a negative effect on turf quality.

With compost materials as with any other topdressing material, care must be taken to provide adequate cultivation in conjunction with the topdressing procedure. The more a topdressing material differs from the existing root zone, the more cultivation is necessary to blend the two materials. This is done to minimize the effects of layering. Applying highly organic compost to a mineral based soil brings with it the risk of layering. If adequate cultivation is not provided, this risk can become greater with each subsequent application. In this particular situation more is not necessarily better. An anaerobic organic layer (black layer) in the soil is a potentially devastating problem on athletic fields

(continued page 18)

Topdressing Materials (continued from page 17)

Cultivation in conjunction with topdressing should be accomplished during times of the year when there is adequate moisture available and when the turf is actively growing and is in a position to repair itself. Topdressing materials with high organic matter content such as straight compost materials should not be applied when there are inadequate moisture levels or when there is the potential for drought stress. These materials have the ability to rob the turf of available moisture when moisture is in limited supply.

Core aerification is generally the recommended means of cultivation with any topdressing application. Multiple passes done in different directions are typically recommended. Again, the intensity of the aerification procedure is governed by factors such the extent of texture variation between the topdressing material and the root zone and the degree of thatch buildup in the area to be topdressed. When root zone modification or turf renovation is the intent of a topdressing application, multiple passes to provide a coring pattern of a maximum distance between core holes of 2" and at a depth of 2" to 3" is recommended. The application of topdressing should be accomplished prior to core aerification. The cores, along with the topdressing should be dragged into the core holes using a drag mat at the completion of the procedure. If a more rapid change in the surface conditions is desired, the soil cores can be removed after aerification; in this case it would be appropriate to topdress after soil cores are removed.

Where severe soil structure damage has occurred such as in goalmouths, it is sometimes necessary to till the area in an effort to blend the topdressing material with the damaged soil and create an adequate seedbed.

Be wary of over-cultivating with the rototiller style of equipment, especially if the soil is to dry. Rototiller style cultivators can destroy existing soil structure by pulverizing the soil into a fine grainy (dusty) material if over used. As with most soil cultivation procedures, the soil should be moist enough to hold its shape after being clenched in your fist but dry enough to crumble if rubbed between your thumb and forefinger.

It is not uncommon among sports field managers and contractors alike to incorporate topdressing into a renovation project. Topdressing can not only smooth and therefore improve the topography of a field, but also improve soil seed contact, which is critical to the success of an athletic field renovation.

When topdressing is used properly, it can provide beneficial results, which in certain situations could not otherwise be achieved as effectively. The cost of these benefits must be justified when compared to all other available options.

* Jim Hermann is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); President, Total Control Inc. - Athletic Field Management and Consulting; and SFMANJ Board Member



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