

PROSCAPE

By Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., golf course designer and consultant

Q: What do you recommend for rehabilitation of campground sites and playground areas where heavy use causes deterioration and continual destruction of turf? St. Louis, MO

A: The symptom of the problem is poor turf cover and the causes may be:

- 1) Compacted rootzones.
- 2) Excessive mechanical damage to the turf.
- 3) Inadequate surface and subsurface drainage.
- 4) Improper turf varieties.
- 5) Improper maintenance practices.
- 6) Inadequate maintenance budget.

All of these are complicated by the fact that St. Louis is infamous for its adverse heat/humidity effects on turf. However, improvement in turf quality may be gained by isolating each deliterious factor and solving them individually as time and money permit.

The soil compaction problem is obviously reduced by aeration and in this case the greater the frequency the better. As a minimum, I would suggest at least twice in the fall; once soon after Labor Day and another just prior to the ground

freezing. With the early aeration the plugs may be removed if they are unsightly or if rain would turn them to mud. If your budget and manpower permit, remove the plugs from those most trafficked areas and topdress heavily with sand. With the late aerification just try to get the holes as big and deep as possible so they become reservoirs for water that may aid the freezing, thawing, and heaving processes of winter. This natural process does much to relieve compacted areas and should be encouraged. Sand topdressings at any period when the turf is actively growing is recommended.

Surface and subsurface drainage may be important because you have little control over when people use the park or campgrounds, and their use when soils are too wet may contribute to the compacted rootzones. Consult with your local soil conservation service representative for the best spacing and depth of tile for your given soils.

The mechanical damage to the turf is difficult to control but may be reduced by keeping wheel traffic to an absolute minimum, provide paths or walkways in congested areas, and mowing turf

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between 2" - 3" high. The mowing height and frequency are much dependent upon the turfgrass used. Traditionally, tall fescues have been recommended for heavy wear areas, but they tiller only weakly and hence have little ability to spread or repair damaged areas. Try using some of the finebladed ryegrass which may be less wear-resistant but tiller better. However, some cultivars do not perform well in high heat/humidity microclimates so consult with your area extension agronomist or a reputable seed dealer for the best selection. Actually, I would suggest that you acquire small quantities of different ryegrass seed and make your own little test plots in a place that would be subjected to wear and compare them to a tall fescue checkplot. When you reseed, you should cut in the new seed using a Rogers type seeder and go in two directions if possible. However be careful not to build up a monoculture of only cultivar and lose the benefits of a blend of slightly different genetic materials.

Another turf management technique that should be used concurrently with the fall aerifications is fall fertilization. If you only fertilize once a year, do it in October with a couple of pounds of nitrogen in a 1-1-1 to 3-1-2 ratio fertilizer. This encourages root growth in the late fall after aerification and early spring before the soils become compacted. If you fertilize twice a year, consider doing it after your aerifications. Keep spring fertilization to a minimum for you may be encouraging rapid, succulent growth that further reduces its wear resistance and requires more mowing and hence, more mechanical damage.

All these suggestions require time and money which may be in short supply. Perhaps you can use this answer and other such materials to persuade those so empowered to increase your budget if they want better turf.

Q: My husband and I have been doing landscaping for five years and now he would like to go back to school and get his degree in Landscape Architecture. Is there a list of schools offering programs in Landscape Architecture? M.W., Austin, TX

A: Because many universities are constantly modifying or diversifying educational programs, lists of offerings change quickly and hence no list may be comprehensive. However, recently the American Society of Landscape Architects published a list called "1978-1979 List of Accredited Programs in Landscape Architecture" and is available by writing to A.S.L.A., 1900 "M" Street N.W., Suite 750, Washington D.C. 20036, Attention — Director of Education and Research. Although this lists approximately forty institutions with full programs, there are many other schools that offer individual courses related to L.A. but no degree. So check with colleges and universities in your area for specific offerings.

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