

MANAGEMENT CALENDAR: COOL-SEASON ATHLETIC FIELDS



Quality turf can make athletic fields safer for young athletes. Field managers should follow this general guide for safer turf.

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Frequent evaluation of current athletic field management programs is important. Setting up annual management calendars helps increase administrative decision-making and personnel management decision-making efficiency.

Calendars let the professional plan ahead for equipment and material purchasing needs, as well as program seasonal labor needs. A generalized management scheme has been outlined for Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue athletic fields to provide a basic outline for this planning process.

Specific dates, intensity and frequency of practices will vary with geographic location, traffic demands and facility resources.

January-February

The first step toward safer athletic turf is to begin the year with a soil test. Do this as soon as the ground is not frozen. Collect soil samples from the field from a zero to three-inch depth. Combine 20 to 30 core samples in a bucket to make up a single sample for each field.

The next step is to fill low spots. Surface drainage will improve by filling low spots or regrading fields with good topsoil. Let the soil settle for two to three weeks prior to repair. This will allow time for a few soaking rain-

falls to aggregate the new soil. Install internal drainage where needed.

Finally, plan ahead for the months to come. Do this by observing the field for winter disease activity and winter annual weed invasion. Determine the need for renovation and order seed, sod, fertilizer and pesticides. Line up equipment and personnel needed for the year.

March-April

Mowing will become necessary in

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these spring months. Begin mowing as soon as turf height exceeds the mowing height by one third. For instance, if your mowing height is two inches, begin mowing at 2 ²/₃ inches. Always use sharp mowers.

Aerify the field using a core aerifier. Make at least two passes to alleviate compaction. Use the ³/₄-inch diameter tines. Break up cores with chain link fence or chain drag. Time

the aeration during a period of rapid foliage growth to minimize weed invasion and to minimize the time the field shows aeration damage.

The next move is to apply pre-emergence herbicides. If crabgrass has been a problem in the past, use a pre-emergence herbicide such as benefin, bensulide, dacthal, napropamide, oxadiazon, pendimethalin or siduron. If goosegrass has been a serious problem, consider using oxadiazon. If early season seeding and crabgrass control are going to be necessary, use siduron.

May

Aerification is still important in late spring. Heavily-trafficked fields may benefit from light aerification in this time frame while the grass has healing potential.

Next, identify the weed and select the most effective herbicide for control. Consider the following alone or in combination: 2,4-D, MCPP (mecoprop), 2,4-DP (dichlorprop), dicamba or triclopyr. Follow label directions closely.

Fertilizing should be done lightly. Apply the equivalent of 0.5 lb. soluble nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. (22 lb. nitrogen per acre). This can come from various sources of nitrogen. Irrigation after application is generally beneficial.

June-August

Heavily-trafficked fields should be lightly aerified again in early June. Make two passes with $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch diameter tines. Drag the cores into the surface with a chain link fence or chain drag.

Schedule mowing regularly so no more than one-third of the existing grass blade is being removed with each mowing. Keep the mowers sharp, since dull mowers injure turf, increasing water use and wasting stored food reserves.

Irrigate the field as necessary. Water infrequently, but heavily when you do. Early morning irrigation (4 a.m. to 10 a.m.) is the most effective and beneficial. Time irrigation to avoid traffic on wet fields, if possible. In the summer it's important to watch for disease, particularly on tall fescue and perennial ryegrass fields. Rhizoctonia brown patch is the most prevalent and is effectively controlled with Bayleton 25WP, Chipco 26019, Daconil 2787 or Dyrene. Follow label

directions closely.

In late August, it's important to spot-seed or sod-patch thin areas. Light surface disruption with a three-pronged rake is desirable prior to establishment. Lightly foot-trample the seeded or sodded areas to assure seed and sod to soil contact.

September

Fertilize according to the soil sample recommendations. If phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) levels are high, use straight nitrogen. Apply the equivalent of 1.0 lb. of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. (40 to 50 lb. soluble nitrogen per acre). If P and K are not in the high soil test range, use a complete fertilizer following soil test recommendations.

Aerate the field lightly in early September using the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch coring tines. Drag the cores into the turf.

At this time, consider repair needs. Overseeding of damaged areas can still be beneficial. Spot-sodding using tightly-butted, thick-cut sod is quickly playable.

October

Fertilize by following the September procedure.

Consider the need for broadleaf weed control. Winter annuals germinate in the fall and are most effectively controlled in this time frame. If herbicides are necessary, apply them in strict accordance with the label instructions.

November-December

In November, fertilize following the September procedure. In December, consider the repair needs.

After the last game, evaluate the damage to the field and decide on the reasonable methods of repair. If sodding is a possibility, it is best done with cool-season grasses at this time to allow maximum rooting. **LM**

Mention of specific products in this sample program does not imply exclusive endorsement of any one product. It was done to simplify the program for educational purposes.

COOL-SEASON ATHLETIC FIELD MANAGEMENT



	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
AERATE			Use coring aerifer. Make at least two passes.		Light aerification.	Light aerification in early June.			Aerate lightly			
DISEASE CONTROL						Watch for disease and treat as necessary.						
FERTILIZE					Fertilize lightly.				Fertilize: follow soil test recommendations.	Follow Sept. procedure	Follow Sept. procedure	
IRRIGATE						As needed. Infrequently, but heavy when you do.						
MOW			Begin mowing as soon as turf height exceeds mowing height by 1/3rd			Regularly.						
REPAIR	Fill in low spots to improve surface drainage.								Consider repair needs.			Consider repair needs.
RENOVATE	Determine need for renovation and order seed, sod, fertilizer pesticides.											
SEED/SOD						Spot seed or sod in late August.						
SOIL	Test soil as soon as the ground is not frozen.											
WEED CONTROL			Apply pre-emergence herbicides.		Control broadleaf weeds.					Consider broadleaf weed control.		