

Scheduling field maintenance

Segregating parts of the total landscape into different maintenance areas helps prioritize needs.

by John Anderson

■ Wouldn't it be great if, year after year, the same field management program produced perfect results? If it were only so simple. But from one year to the next,

changes in cultural practices are necessary to achieve the desired results.

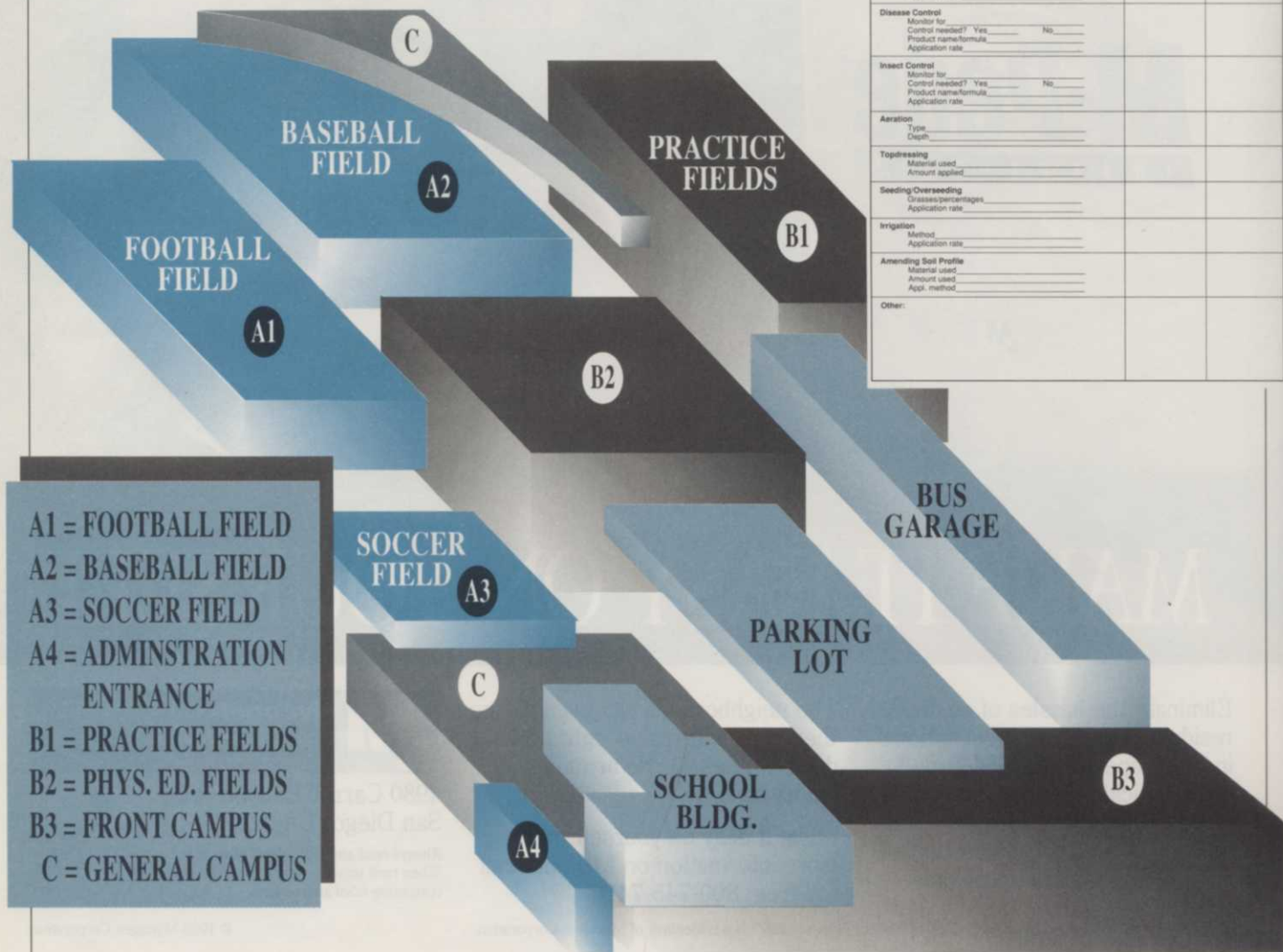
Varying circumstances from outside forces—like weather conditions, degree of use and budget restrictions—may drive certain changes. Other changes are instigated in response to updated research, improved equipment and products, or analysis of past program results.

It takes the expertise of a trained professional to develop a schedule of field maintenance to deal with all the variables. The ability to adjust and manipulate management practices is key to achieving the desired results. Planning a year-long

schedule, rather than just a seasonal one, allows for program adjustments that can be adapted to changing conditions without losing sight of the overall plan.

Planning is key.

A master plan—The following method *continued on page 18*



FIELD MAINTENANCE			
MONTH	AREA CLASSIFICATION		
	MAINTENANCE PRACTICE	SCHEDULED FREQUENCY	DATE(S) PERFORMED
Mowing	Height of cut, _____		
Fertilization	Product name/formula _____ Application rate _____		
Weed Control	Monitor for _____ Control needed? Yes _____ No _____ Product name/formula _____ Application rate _____		
Disease Control	Monitor for _____ Control needed? Yes _____ No _____ Product name/formula _____ Application rate _____		
Insect Control	Monitor for _____ Control needed? Yes _____ No _____ Product name/formula _____ Application rate _____		
Aeration	Type _____ Depth _____		
Topdressing	Material used _____ Amount applied _____		
Seeding/Overseeding	Grasses/percentages _____ Application rate _____		
Irrigation	Method _____ Application rate _____		
Amending Soil Profile	Material used _____ Amount used _____ Appl. method _____		
Other:			

of developing a master plan is adaptable for any site. Classify your grounds into areas according to their maintenance requirements. Set up as many areas as you feel are necessary to work out your plan. Consider these five major factors in determining the classifications:

1) What level of use do the grounds receive? How many people go through the area? What type of use occurs there? How often is it under use?

2) What quality level do you wish to achieve? What degree of maintenance will be required to maintain field playability with anticipated use? How often and by whom is the area seen? What are the quality expectations of users, coaches and athletic directors, owners or management, spectators?

3) What level of management do the plants require? What are the seasonal needs of the various turf species under

anticipated use? Are there any potential problems that may be triggered by unusual weather or heavier use? What about specific problems or major maintenance tasks for ornamentals?

4) What are the site conditions? What soil type or types are involved at each site, including skinned vs. grassed areas? What effect does site location have on climatic conditions (e.g. windswept field, full sun, etc.)? What drainage and irrigation factors are involved?

5) What kind of budget is available? What is the staff level and experience of the labor force? What equipment is available (on-hand or lease/loan)? How much of the budget is for supplies?

After looking at these factors, separate your sites into areas of management (see illustration), then create a program specific to the needs of each classified area.

Specifics—Look at the tools available in terms of cultural practices, and determine to what extent each will be needed for each classification. For example, cultural practices available for turf include: mowing, irrigation, fertility, pest control, aeration, seeding, topdressing, amending the soil profile, etc.

Plan soil tests so that results will be available to formulate the most effective fertilization program for each site. Note trouble spots that will require special attention or eventual renovation. Set up a monitoring schedule for pest problems so that control products will be used as needed to deal with target organisms specifically. Consider the effects of each practice in relation to overall site conditions.

Once you have established what work each site needs done, the next step is to schedule when the work should take place. This is determined by the five factors (above) used in separating areas.

Breaking the calendar into two-month groups allows you to formulate a flexible program, but keeps the goals in a manageable but defined time frame.

The last process of the year is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Winter is no hibernation period: even if the weather keeps everyone off the fields, the time is highly productive. It's ideal for analyzing what went right or wrong the previous growing season, and developing a strategy to improve and refine the program.

—The author is account representative for Arthur Clesen, Inc., Wheeling, Ill. He has 15 years experience in the turf industry, and is a member of the national Sports Turf Managers Association and its Midwest Chapter.



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