

It's been another great summer of dealing with "contingencies," those things beyond our control that we all face at one time or another.

► Howard County, Md. is in "a cost-effective mode," says Art Downing, sports field supervisor for parks and recreation.

"What is normally a 4 or 5 lb. nitrogen application is now down to 2 lb. It saves about \$2000-\$3000 a year," estimates Downing.

A wise decision? Perhaps, since many turf nutrition experts say "spoon-feeding" with lower nitrogen levels is good for turf.

Downing says the number of acres that they fertilize has also been cut.

"We used to fertilize the whole park," says Downing. "Now, we just do the larger open areas, not the turf along walkways, or islands."

Layoffs are part of the picture, too. That's hard to take, with 35 softball fields and 27 football/soccer fields to manage, and a staff of eight that is now down to two. Downing

says turf has to be grown at three inches.

► Neil Campbell, of the Birmingham, Mich. public schools, oversees 15 athletic fields.

His summer has had the usual turf restoration projects, but spring was late.

"We had snow on Mothers Day," says Campbell, which is actually a pretty novel way to help you remember that day.

"We had a late jump on the season," says Campbell. "Some opportunities were lost, because we had to take care of the problems."

Campbell plans to try crumb rubber as a soil amendment, based on research by Trey Rogers at Michigan State University. Crumb rubber has been proven to reduce turf impact and compaction.

► Bob Dale, supervisor of grounds for the

You can deal with what comes along



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Siphons a cure for wet fairways

University of Evansville, has a multi-use field that couldn't take all the wear and tear from soccer, summer camp activities and intramural sports, so he seeded with a common bermudagrass. Hybrid bermuda, he determined, wouldn't be able to handle all the traffic at an inch-and-a-half cut.

"The Arizona common filled in quickly," reports Dale, "and the field was in play five weeks later."

► Larry Group, a landscape architect for the Lincoln, Neb., parks and recreation department, tells of some of the regulations in place for playground areas: rubber padding, minimum "safety distances" between toys, and height restrictions on jungle-gyms and sliding boards.

I knew that businesses like to program brand loyalty into kids, but this is a twist.

Get 'em used to government control while they're young! **LM**

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