

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Happy Fall! The thought is that a lot of the “green” work that gets done on a grass surface happens in the summer months. While this may be the case for most lawns, for a sports field, this is absolutely false!

Most sports fields get the most play during the warm summer months. While work can get done on a field in the summer months, if there is no pause to the amount of play that it sees, you will see very little for your efforts. Think of seeding. You plant a seed, water and care for it and just as it starts to pop out of the ground and grow...it get’s squished by a shoe! Sometimes that little seedling can grow back but most of the time it is too damaged and dies off.

There is a break between the works that happened at the Ultimate fields. For late July and early August, the only thing that took place was monitoring, mowing, and irrigation repairs.

This year there was an issue with the irrigation pump. The issue was beyond the knowledge of those at Mountainview and another company was brought in for expertise in internal pump repairs. Thankfully, with this break, the irrigation system was still able to irrigate the fields and no damage was done because of any lack of water. The fields were continually irrigated which aided in the lush color all year and what we expect to be a fully recovered turf surface by next summer.

On **August 28** a summer application of fertilizer was put on the fields. The summer fertilizer is a specialized granular product that aids in the constant “feeding” of the turf through a slow release coating. During the hot summer days, a surge of growth from a fast release of nutrients can cause extensive damage. A summer fertilizer that releases nutrients over a 12 week period allows for the turf to have a constant supply of beneficial nutrients and no chemical burn.

As we welcomed September and the slightly colder evenings, we also thought it was time to do a little Fall remedial work to the fields. Heavy and repeated foot traffic is a reality in the Ultimate Frisbee sport. Towards the end of a season the cleat traffic on the fields is beginning to show through issues with soil compaction. The turf gets more thin and the soil hard. That is why on **September 17** a solid deep tine aeration was done to all fields.

On **September 23, 24 and 25**, before the weather got too cold, overseeding took place. Every field received seed to help fill in any bare areas and other areas with more extensive damage had additional applications. The seed was a combination Kentucky bluegrass, perennial Ryegrass and creeping red fescue. The mixture aids in proper germination and is the best mix for a sports field application.

An experienced equipment operator returned to the fields on **October 1**, to topdress all of the fields. This specialized machine evenly distributes a quality sports turf soil blend to all of the fields. This application aids in quicker seed germination, helps with any unlevel areas of a field and is added protected over the winter to older turf plants. After an aeration, soil is usually returned to the fields in order to compensate with any quality topsoil that has been damaged from foot or equipment traffic.

A crew from Mountainview returned to the fields on **October 9** to inspect the fields, test the soil compaction level and test the soil moisture level. It was determined between testing the moisture level and looking at the upcoming forecast that the irrigation system and hydro could be turned off for the season.

The same crew returned to the fields on **October 15** to properly winterize the irrigation system. With cold weather and frost threatening in the near future, it was very important that all the water got removed from the irrigation lines. Any water left in the lines during a freeze would cause the pipes to burst.

The last fertilization of 2015 occurred on **October 19**. A crew from Mountainview fertilized all the fields with a Fall formula. It is very important for any turf surface to not have a surge of growth going into the winter. A fertilizer high in nitrogen can cause extensive growth to the turf leaf. This attracts fungus going into the winter months and the fungus grows throughout the winter. During the next Spring this fungus grows with the new warmth and extra moisture. This can be very detrimental to the turf and usually the cause of winter damage in the form of "Snow Mold". For this season, is it best that Fall fertilizer has very little nitrogen but lots of potassium. The potassium feeds the roots (versus the leaf). These nutrients help to strengthen the turf root and aid in protecting it all winter long.

The year started out very wet but for the most part it has been a very favorable year for growing grass and it is expected that through the remedial Fall maintenance that the fields will make a full recovery after a year of play.

As a final note, Mountainview would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the Ultimate Frisbee Association for another successful season.

Wednesday, July 29, 2015

The Ottawa Valley area is experiencing a heat wave lately which will result in a slower growing turf and weeds to "pop". Being that the grass grows slower during extreme heat, weeds are looking more abundant. Once the temperature gets back down to around 20 degrees, the strong turf will begin the process of choking out the weeds again. If the turf wasn't strong from lack of maintenance, the weeds would continue to thrive.

Intensive maintenance practices were put on hold being that the upcoming No Borders tournament was approaching. Regular maintenance (watering, mowing) continued but we didn't want to implement any maintenance that would stress out the turf before the big event. A team from Mountainview did go to clean up around the fields in preparation for the event. Removing any excess brush, trimming and cleaning around the parking area all happened on **July 23**.

It is unfortunate to report that on **July 15** the primer pump on the irrigation broke. This was replaced 2 years ago and we are hopeful that the warranty should cover the repair. Since then, the irrigation is no longer on the automated system but for a short period of time we have been able to monitor precipitation in the area and turn on the water by hand. It is expected to be up and working again very shortly.

Everyone here at Mountainview is geared up for maintenance practices that will begin to take place late in the summer to help remediate the play that fields have seen so far this

season. This maintenance work repairs the fields from most damage that is done from play and compaction and gets it ready for a new season the following year.

The fields are being mowed at this time twice a week at this time and 100% of the clippings are being kept on the fields as a natural fertilizer.

Wednesday, July 8, 2015

While the growing season has been very favorable thus far, there has been one issue at the fields in Manotick Station, dirt bikes. The fields are too much of a temptation for young adults who wish to use the fields as their personal dirt bike track. While normally it may not cause damage, the wet sprint their tires have made impressions in the turf. In order to help discourage them from going on the fields, gates have been installed in a couple locations of entry. These gates were installed by Mountainview on **June 25 and June 26**.

The massive amounts of rainfall had hindered some of the fields from properly drying up this spring. In order to help with this issue, the irrigation was shut off on some of the fields. Over the last couple of weeks the drier weather allowed for the fields to properly dry. On **July 7** the fields were inspected and it was decided to turn on the irrigation again on fields 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 14. The long term forecast is not calling for a lot of rain and we did not want to risk the fields getting too dry. Grass that dries out goes into dormancy and is therefore much weaker.

Overall, the fields are doing well as the fertilizer from June 24 is continuing to release into the soil and feeding the roots. The mowing is taking place 2-3 times a week, weather dependent.

Wednesday, June 24, 2015

Happy Summer! The prospect of Summer brings thoughts of hot days and long nights. In the turf world, it also means close inspection. The weather so far has been throwing everyone for a loop. In early May, we saw temperatures rise above 30 degrees. It later dropped and we even experienced some frost at the end of the month of May. June can be described with one word; precipitation.

We are able to measure the amount of rain fall for the Manotick station area and it was recorded that between June 1 and June 17, there was 90 mm of rain over that time. That is 3.5 inches in the first two week of a month that typically does not receive that much rain fall. Thankfully because the new water measuring system for the irrigation at the fields, there has not been an over abundance of water from rainfall AND irrigation.

There were some concerns about the moisture of the fields and the marks that were being made because of it. A trip to the fields on **June 17** confirmed that the system was running correctly and not watering the fields when there was enough rainwater. There were some noticeable tracks. On number 14 and 2 there was some damage from the tires on the mower but the majority of the tracks were done from dirt bikes. Locations for

gates were finalized in the hopes that it would encourage some of the trespassers to keep out.

On **June 17**, fields 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 14 had the irrigation cycle completely turned off. These fields have “wet feet” and have had trouble drying up since the beginning of Spring. By turning the irrigation cycle off on these fields, it will give them time to 100% dry so that there is no additional damage done (even with rainfall) by tires and foot traffic.

There was some concern over a dead tree limb by the fenced area. A team from Mountainview cut that limb down and disposed of the debris. (**June 17**)

On **June 19**, the fields got their second application of Spring fertilizer. This fast release fertilizer will continue to encourage turf growth and root health. While they were there, overseeding was also done to the far corner of field 9 which appeared to have ice/water damage. The seed was applied and rolled in order to give it better contact with the soil.

The fields are currently being mowed 2–3 times a week depending on the weather. Overall, the health and appearance of the turf is good and it will continue to be closely monitored.

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

While May was hot and dry, June seemed to be more Spring-like with a sufficient amount of rain fall, cooler nights and warm (not too hot) days. This has made for interesting growing conditions. The turf has begun its rapid growth and improved color with abundance of moisture and warmer weather. This has also made for some difficulty in making some repairs over at the UPI fields.

Earlier in the year there were some irrigation repairs to be made. In order to do these some turf had to be removed and earth excavated. After the repairs were completed, new sod was laid. It was brought to Mountainviews attention that the new turf was disturbed and no longer an even playing surface. It was discovered that because of the soft, wet ground, when the mowers drove over the new sod, it was disturbed. On **June 2** a crew went out to the fields to repair the damage. They removed the old turf, leveled the ground and laid new sod on field 4 and 11. The areas were flagged so they would no longer be mistakenly disturbed. It takes about 2 weeks for the new turf to be properly re-rooted and able to be played on.

On **June 10**, Lindsay went out to the fields to do a quick inspection and soil sampling. She walked all of the fields and made a couple of notes. A tree limb near the compound needs to be removed and some moisture damage on field 9 will be rolled and seeded. It was noted during this inspection that the overall color of the fields has greatly improved from 2 weeks ago. The fertilizer has broken down and the nutrients have been taken up by the plant. The added nutrients have aided to the turf in growth and boosted the color. It is now a much darker appearance. This added growth allows for a thicker turf and therefore less likeliness for weed infestation. It will continue to aid in the health over the next few weeks until the next application is applied.

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

Welcome to the 2015 season! The beautiful green grass of UPI is a welcomed sight after a long and cold winter!

The temperatures and weather have been all over the place for May 2015 but we are taking it week by week and trying to anticipate Mother Nature's next move.

The month started out with extremely warm temperatures and so while out doing a spring inspection, Mountainviews external manager fired up the irrigation system which was on **May 7**. It was noted that a few irrigation heads were broken beyond repair from regular use. Luckily, the association already owned some heads that were stored at the Mountainview facility. Therefore the repairs would be quick.

On **May 8**, the mowers and tractor that would be used at the fields throughout the year were floated down to Manotick Station. It was noted that from the abnormal May heat wave that the grass was growing and would soon need mowing. There were a few spots that were wet but we were confident that by the next week they would be good to drive on. It was exactly 1 week later on **May 15** that the mowing began.

A full crew of 6 men loaded up supplies and headed to the fields for a full day of clean up on **May 14**. This included trimming non-mowed areas, mowing the grass in the ditches and cutting around and painting irrigation valve boxes.

On the day that the mowing started, irrigation pipe and heads were fixed and replaced. Irrigation is a crucial part of proper turf maintenance. Proper irrigation means that dormancy will be at a minimum. A grass in dormancy in the summer would mean that it would stop growing. Weeds continue to grow in some of the poorest conditions. Lack of irrigation also means a more compacted soil and harder playing surface.

It was difficult to properly time the first application of fertilizer this year. You want the ground temperature to consistently be above 10 degrees (even at night) and on the other end of the scale, not too hot. Spring fertilizer contains fast-release nitrogen which aids the grass in growth after a long winter. Fast-release fertilizer can burn the grass if it is applied when it is too hot. The nutrients will also not release if the temperature is too cold. After a heat wave in May and then a frost shortly after, it was finally the optimum time on **May 27** to apply the spring fertilizer.

Upon my last inspection at the end of May, I noted that the fields had a lighter green appearance. It is likely due to the fact that the grass is hungry for nutrients. I will continue my visits over the next week and a half to watch for the improved appearance after the fertilizer has begun to be absorbed by the plant.