

Putting your field to bed plan

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It's that time a year again. Fall sports are wrapping up, the days are shorter and turf growth has slowed down. Even though the weather is changing and outdoor sports are ending, forgetting about the field until spring is a huge mistake. The condition of your field will not magically get better over the winter. This fall, you should plan on your field going through extreme winter conditions and also unpredictable spring weather. Preparing your fields now will give you the best chance to be ready in the spring.



Putting Your “TURF” to Bed

Your turf may be able to begin to recover from damage after the season if it is still actively growing. If turf growth has stopped, you can still take steps to ensure your field survives the winter.

- Lower your mowing height to reduce your chances for snow mold outbreaks and damage.
- Even if your turf is dormant, aerify with hollow-tines and seed so you do not have to worry about it in the spring when your field may be waterlogged from spring rains.

- Applying topdressing in conjunction with aerification will also improve conditions in the spring.
 - On native soil fields, consider topdressing with compost.
 - Sand-based field should be topdressed with sand that closely matches the particle size distribution of the rootzone.
- Seed large, worn-out areas like the center of your football field.
- Sod smaller worn-out areas. Even if the sod is dormant, you can install it in places like soccer goal mouths, in front of pitcher's mound, and areas around the dugout. As soon as the weather warms up, it will start rooting.
- Apply a fungicide to protect against snow mold.
- Use growth covers. Growth covers create a greenhouse-like effect that allows seed to germinate and turf to grow during the winter. Consider using growth covers in your high wear areas after you have seeded them. Be sure to apply a snow mold fungicide.
- Early Fall is the most effective time to control perennial broadleaf weeds.



Putting Your “INFIELD SKIN” to Bed

- Remove existing conditioner from around the turf edges and either stockpile it on the infield and covering for the winter or completely removing it from the field. Material that will eventually migrate and end up around the edges of the grass when the conditions are dry and windy. Removing the existing conditioner will drastically cut down on the “lip” buildup where the grass and the infield mix meet.
 - Use silt fence or 2 x 4 boards around the edge of your infield skin to prevent wind-blown infield dirt from forming a lip between the skinned area and the turf.
- Add infield material and do a final grade on the skin to ensure proper slope. You never know what the weather conditions will be like come spring, and trying to fit in grading and dragging may prove to be difficult.
- Edge the field! Nothing will set a field apart more than a straight, clean edge.
 - Now is also a great time to check the transitions between the dirt and grass or the grass and warning track. The transitions should feel smooth when placing your foot on half of each surface.
- Mound maintenance is always a must.
 - Flip the pitching rubber or replace, if needed.
 - Reshape Slope, Table, and Sides
 - Make sure your mound is properly covered.
- Homeplate maintenance goes hand in hand with the mound.
 - Replace homeplate, if needed.
 - Repair Batter’s Boxes and Catcher’s Box
 - Make sure your Homeplate area is properly covered

Putting your field to bed will help it wake up ready to go in the spring.
