

Bermudagrass Grow-In

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Establishing bermudagrass for athletic fields requires a different time frame than cool-season grasses such as bluegrass, ryegrass and fescues. We usually recommend seeding or sprigging bermudas around the 1st of June with a cut-off date of July 15th. However, if fall use is expected then the June 1st date is a must to insure complete coverage. Installing bermuda sod can be done up to the end of July or three weeks prior to use. The following guidelines are recommended regardless of installation type (seed, sprigs, or sod). The first winter is the most critical for newly established bermudas, therefore it is important to have these grasses go into the first winter in the best possible condition (full coverage, over-seeded with rye and/or the possible use of blankets).

Procedure:

1. Make sure grade of field is finalized to spec.'s allowing the best possible surface drainage. Now is the time to correct or repair any imperfections.
2. Conduct a regular soil test of the site for lime and fertilizer requirements.
3. Apply any lime required by soil test to adjust pH of the soil. We usually figure this by taking the neutralizable acidity and multiplying it by 25 to equal the total pounds of lime required per 1,000 square feet. We do not recommend more than 50 pounds of lime per 1,000 square feet in one application. Therefore lime requirements in excess of 50 pounds per 1,000 square feet should be divided into two or more applications on a two to three month interval.
4. Apply a good starter fertilizer that is similar to a 10-24-18 at a rate of 1 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet (10 lbs of 10-24-18 fertilizer per 1,000 square feet or 436 lbs of fertilizer per acre) just prior to seeding, sprigging or sodding. It is important to have a starter fertilizer higher in phosphorus and potassium (2nd and 3rd numbers). Other fertilizers available at local co-ops include a 6-24-24, which also works well. This calculates to 16.7 lbs of the 6-24-24 fertilizer per 1,000 square feet or 726 lbs of fertilizer per acre figuring a one lb rate of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
5. Apply Launch (registered product of PBI/Gordon) at of rate of 1 quart per 1,000 square feet. This is a bio-stimulant that improves the speed of grow-in and rooting. Spray this over the top of newly seeded, sprigged or sodded bermuda (same day). Allow this product to remain on tissue a few hours prior to watering in.



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6. Five days after planting or installing bermuda, apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of a 46-0-0 urea. This calculates to 2.18 lbs of urea per 1,000 square feet or 95 lbs of urea fertilizer per acre. Continue to apply this rate of fertilizer on a 14-day interval, thereafter for native soil fields. Apply 0.75 lbs of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of urea fertilizer (71 lbs of urea fertilizer per acre) on a 7-day interval, thereafter for modified sand/soil fields.
7. Make a second application of Launch Bio-stimulant 14 days after initial application at the same one quart per 1,000 square foot rate.
8. Keep area moist, but do not over water. Avoid puddling and runoff.
9. Mow at lowest possible setting if using a rotary mower (around one inch if possible). Mow at 5/8 to 3/4 inch when using a reel-type mower. Mow frequently to avoid excessive clippings, usually twice per week. This will promote horizontal growth rather than vertical growth to form a good heavy mat or network of rhizomes and stolons.
10. These procedures will insure the best possible grow-in of bermudagrass for your athletic fields. Following these procedures in a timely manner should give 100% cover of seeded and sprigged fields by the end of July, if installed by or on the 1st of June. Sodded fields obviously give you instant cover, however you still require some time for tacking down with roots and knitting the sod seams horizontally (about three weeks).
11. See [MU Guide Sheet # G6770](#) for selections of bermudagrass cultivars.



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