

Sports Turf Industry Fact Sheet

- Annual purchases of sports turf products and services is over \$1.29 billion on over 2.8 million acres. That's approximately \$457 per acre. These figures do not include salaries.
- Parks and recreation makes up \$480 million in annual purchases while schools are at \$685 million, college/universities \$71 million, and professional facilities spend approximately \$52 million.
- Professional sports facilities average approximately 15 acres spending \$4,333 per acre, colleges/universities spend \$1,075 per acre on an average of 30 acres, schools spend \$658 per acre on an average of 65 acres, and parks spend an average of \$284 per acre over 130 acres.
- Average annual spending on equipment and supplies at colleges/universities is \$32,300, while parks spend \$38,850. Schools spend \$42,750 and professional facilities spend \$65,000.
- The average sports turf manager has worked in the industry for 13 years.
- Two in three sports turf managers have a four-year college degree or an advanced degree.
- The average crew has 16 full-time staff and five part-time. Seasonal staff average is approximately nine.
- It is estimated that there are approximately 16,000 schools, 2,200 colleges/universities, 13,000 parks, and 800 professional facilities.

The Sports Turf Industry and Groundskeeping

- A highly visible profession with tremendous growth potential.
- New facilities and field conversions.
- Excellent salary bases at the top.
 - Less stress than managing a golf course.



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University of Missouri

Survey Results - Conducted within the Sports Turf Managers Association

Sports Turf Staff:

- Average number of years in the profession was 13.
- Typical manager has been in his or her current position 7.5 years, while 38% had more than ten years tenure in their present position.
- NFL and MLB facilities have the smallest staffs, usually three or less permanent members. Whereas universities and municipal parks systems have an average of 7 to 11 on their turf maintenance staff.
- Seasonal fluctuations in the northern climates, there is often no seasonal changes in the southern latitudes.
- Only 20% of managers have a single field to maintain.
- Forty-two percent of managers maintain 5 to 10 fields.

Events per Facility:

- The number of events per sports complex reported ranged from a low of 8 where only a single football field was involved to >3,500 events where multiple use complexes involved youth and adults in all sports.
- Other events include band practice, concerts, drill teams, religious crusades, lacrosse, field hockey, and intra-mural activities.
- Greatest event: softball (avg.=151 per year), reported range - 30 to 2,000.
- Soccer (avg.=125 per year), reported range - 30 to 1,000.
- Baseball (avg.=112 per year), reported range - 30 to 1,000.
- Football (avg.=62 per year), reported range - 6 to 500.
- Gives credence to sports managers identifying soil compaction as a major problem.

Root Zones:

- Cool-season bluegrass fields: 81% native soil, 19% sand based.
- Warm-season bermudagrass fields: 82% native soil, 18% sand based.
- Sports managers expressed a 3 to 1 preference for sand-based fields. The major reasons given 1) Greater resistance to compaction, 2) Better playability under wet conditions.
- Greater soil strength was cited as the most important advantage of native soil fields.
- Loss of nutrients to leaching was the major problem encountered with sand-based fields.



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Mowing:

- Frequent mowing is essential for healthy, dense turf because it reduces scalping, disease incidence, the need for sweeping and it improves field appearance.
- Of those surveyed, all mow more than once a week - 2 times (21%), 3 times (30%), 4 times (9%), and daily (40%).

Soil Testing:

- Annually (42%), 2 times annually (22%), 6 times annually (10%), 12 times annually (2%), bi-annually (22%), tri-annually (2%).
- More frequent soil testing was reported by managers who have sand-based fields.
- The use of tissue testing is a standard practice by 44% of survey respondents.

Fertilizers:

- All managers use more than one type of nitrogen fertilizers (soluble, slow-release, specialty, and natural organics).
- Sulfur-coated urea (SCU) was the most widely used slow release source due to acceptable performance and lower cost per unit.

Irrigation:

- Eighty percent of sports fields have pop-up sprinklers, 11% have water cannons, 7% have quick coupler, and 2% have travel or tow impact sprinklers.

Compliments and Criticism:

- The most compliments and criticism came from coaches.
- Players, press, parents, owners, and fans offer compliments from most to least.
- Press, owners, athletic directors, players, trainers, and self offer criticism from most to least.

Most Rewarding Aspects of Sports Turf Management:

- The opportunity to provide safe, quality turf.
- Appreciation by coaches, players, and fans.
- Having a plan come together.
- Seeing fields hold up to heavy traffic.
- Receiving compliments from opposing players and coaches.
- Being outdoors.



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Areas of Concern:

- The status of sports turf facilities at the professional and collegiate level is light years ahead of most middle school, high school, and municipal facilities.
- There needs to be recognition by parents, school administrators, and civic leaders of the risks of injury their children face playing under these unsafe conditions.
- There is a need for municipalities and schools to provide funds to employ qualified turf managers who could greatly improve playability of the fields and safety of the players.
- Colleges and universities are placing more emphasis on sports field management.
- More students are being encouraged to do their internships under qualified sports turf managers.

Consultation:

- It is important for turf managers to ask views of coaches and players about playing conditions.
- Fifty percent of turf managers consult other turf managers first.
- Forty-two percent of turf managers consult university specialist second.
- Twenty-one percent consult sales reps third.
- Thirteen percent consult professional consultants fourth.

Future Needs:

- The need for improved playability and safer athletic fields must continuously be emphasized.
- Since 95%, or more, of sports fields are built on native soils, much more research must be directed toward their improvement. Too much of the research budget at universities is being spent on solving problems of sand-based root zones.
- The number one research requested, by turf managers, was improved techniques for sports field root zone construction.



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