



CrystalGreen[®]
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From the Sports Field: A CASE STUDY



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- JERAD MINNICK
Director - Grounds & Environmental Management
Maryland SoccerPlex, Boyds, MD

Continuous Release Fertilizer builds Maryland SoccerPlex Strong, Wear-Resistant Turf from the Roots Up

What began as a community initiative to build a high-quality multi-field soccer facility in 1998, has grown into the sprawling 162 acre Maryland SoccerPlex. Located 30 miles northwest of Washington D.C. near Germantown, Maryland, the complex was built and is managed by the Maryland Soccer Foundation, a non-profit corporation. The facility officially opened in 2000 and offers players and nearly 800,000 yearly visitors 22 full-size soccer fields to enjoy. The complex includes a championship soccer stadium with seating for 3,200 that is home to the Washington Spirit Women’s Soccer Club.

At the Maryland SoccerPlex, there is a culture and history of environmental responsibility and stewardship. “We run all bio fluids for hydraulics, hybrid mowers, and electric carts,” says sports turf manager, Jerad Minnick. “The paints are VOC free, and we have reduced our use of pesticides.”

Seven of the fields are bermudagrass, while 12 have a bluegrass, rye and fescue cool-season mix. The remaining three fields are covered with synthetic turf. Despite their differences, one thing all the fields share is the punishment inflicted by almost 7000 matches a year. The cool-season fields are busy every weekend from March until Thanksgiving with over 700 hours of play annually, while the bermudagrass fields endure more than 1000 hours of play per year. With league play and tournaments on the weekends, the fields are in constant use, all day long.

So how does the Maryland SoccerPlex balance safe, playable fields with environmental stewardship? “We do everything we can to make the most durable turf possible because we simply don’t have recovery time,” says Minnick. “We’re focused on creating the healthiest and strongest plants possible. That’s important when fighting traffic-related damage.”

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Crystal Green is recognized by:



ADDRESSING DEFICIENCIES WITH PLANT-AVAILABLE P

A couple of years ago, Minnick noticed symptoms of a phosphorous deficiency. “There was a bit of purpling color on the cool-season grasses and the plant physiology wasn’t good,” Minnick recalls. “We figured out through soil testing that we weren’t getting enough plant-available phosphorous, even though it was present in the soil.”

To counter the deficiency, Minnick applied Crystal Green®, which unlike conventional water soluble phosphate fertilizers, combines citrate-solubility with low water solubility. Its Root-Activated™ nutrients are released in the presence of organic acids, like citrates, which plant roots exude in order to help absorb nutrients. The unique composition of Crystal Green allows phosphorus, plus nitrogen and magnesium to release slowly, all season long, and remain plant-available. “We know phosphorous can tie-up,” Minnick reasons. “So why not just apply what the plant needs? When you have a slow-release source, you know that you’re not wasting it; you’re not polluting anything, and the plant takes up exactly what it needs.”

In May, Minnick’s crew applies a low rate of Crystal Green and waters it in before the onset of summer stress. “Their blending is ingenious,” says Minnick. “The particles are so small you could use it on golf course greens.” Minnick often aerates following the applications to help work the Crystal Green down into the soil. “We aerated 24 times last year and people ask if that breaks up the particles. It doesn’t matter because it’s solid all the way through,” said Minnick. Since Crystal Green is not coated, cracks, temperature changes or breaks in the granule will not compromise the continuous release capabilities.

Minnick is impressed with the efficiencies he gets using Crystal Green. “Most of the products I use cost more, but I use less, apply lower rates or apply them less frequently, so my budget is the same. We feel that we get better performance and at least nine months from one application of Crystal Green.”

Most impressive are the results Minnick sees; “We have the most amazing roots, and I didn’t even think it was possible. I like to look at everything I do as a piece to a puzzle. Crystal Green is a core piece of the puzzle. We love it.”

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