

WSU PUYALLUP HIGHLIGHT

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Turfgrass Research Helps Sports Field Managers Accomplish the Impossible

Sports field managers have always wondered what they can do to get their fields in better shape for springtime play. The overseeding and replanting of sports fields to aid in recovery from fall and winter play usually occurs when temperatures warm up in April and May. However, the fields are often already in use, limiting the chances for successful establishment of new grass covers. How can grass grow if people are already walking and playing on it?

In February, 2004, WSU Puyallup researchers Gwen Stahnke (Turfgrass Extension Specialist), Eric Miltner (Associate Research Agronomist), and Matt Johns (Turfgrass Research Technologist) developed a field study to help managers solve the problem. Recognizing that the ability to seed in early February or March would provide enough growing time before heavy springtime use, the field study evaluated the effectiveness of establishing annual, intermediate, and perennial ryegrass under late winter conditions. The study was conducted on fields at WSU Puyallup. Five different test plots were planted. When the results were in, they found that annual or intermediate ryegrass, or combinations of intermediate/perennial or annual/perennial ryegrass, planted in early March, reached 100% coverage within a shorter time span than other combinations. Intermediate ryegrass, a hybrid of the other two species, was preferred to annual due to its superior appearance. This information could potentially impact tens of thousands of young athletes by providing safer playing surfaces for spring sports. This study was recently published in the Pacific Northwest Sports Turf Managers Associations magazine.



Winter germination of improved annual ryegrass in an existing sports field.



Plots of annual, intermediate and perennial ryegrass following late winter seeding.

WSU Puyallup: Solutions for the Region- Programs for Its People.

Weekly Highlights is provided by the people and programs of WSU Puyallup. To include a highlight in an upcoming announcement, please contact either Tanyalee Erwin, terwin@wsu.edu, 253-445-4504, or Jon Newkirk, jnewkirk@wsu.edu, 253-445-4568. If your email is set to text messages only and you wish to see the graphical version of this Highlight, please email Tanyalee and she will send this Highlight as an attachment.