High-level IPM at Cooperstown's Doubleday Field

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Introduction

Doubleday Field is a historic ball field owned by the Village of Cooperstown, which has set a policy to try to eliminate pesticide use on village property, but without establishing an IPM plan of action. The ball field is subjected to intense traffic, hosting over 300 games a year, rain or shine, as well as community events. With the support of the NYS IPM Program, Doubleday Field was managed during the 2012 season using high-level IPM. In 2014, NYS IPM Program support officially resumed.

Take me out to the ball game …

Objectives:

- Mitigate risks associated with conventional pesticides, grub, and weed pressure
- Maintain field quality that meets or exceeds the expectations of stakeholders
- Project Evaluation
- Document and publicize results

Maintaining field quality that prevents divots such as this one taken in early May is a goal of the project.

Procedures

The project team met throughout the summer to assess field conditions, conduct on-site consultations, and investigate alternative management solutions.

- Strict adherence to the core cultural practices was emphasized as the first line of defense against pests.
- Mowing heights were raised to 3" in 2013.
- Fertilization was conducted three times over the season.
- Overseeding was conducted in the spring and late fall at a rate of 4 lbs/1000 ft2.
- Irrigation times were increased by 50%, but the number of applications decreased.
- Warning track material was added to increase its depth to better suppress weeds.
- Outreach materials were developed and distributed.

Veronica filiformis at the turfgrass and warning track border.

2014 – Good year for turfgrass

2014 proved to be an undemanding year for turfgrass and strict adherence to core cultural practices provided a relatively pest free playing field. It was determined that no alternative pesticides were necessary to control weeds or insects in the field. Weeds in the warning track and under the bleachers continued to cause some issues, but the addition of warning track material combined with diligent manual raking and flaming kept these issues under threshold levels.

Equipment needed

Project team recommendations, including the installation of thick cut sod in high traffic areas, were not able to be implemented as there was no truck available for pickup.

Manual raking was necessary as a tractor that had been in the budget was never purchased. Proper equipment would allow for easier raking and grooming, thus reducing weed encroachment into the warning track. The lack of equipment also led to less aerification than was planned.

Dollar spot became an issue after the irrigation system was off line for two weeks when a line was punctured during the Hall of Fame stage installation. Once irrigation was reestablished, the dollar spot injury healed quickly.

Two common reactions:

"Wow! You manage this field without pesticides? It looks amazing."

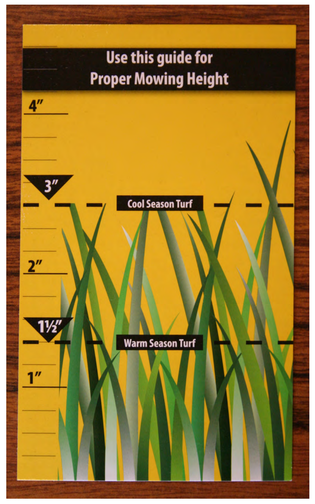
"I am impressed that the municipality is doing that."

Quinton Hasak and Frank Rossi discuss the use of thick cut sod to fix high traffic areas.

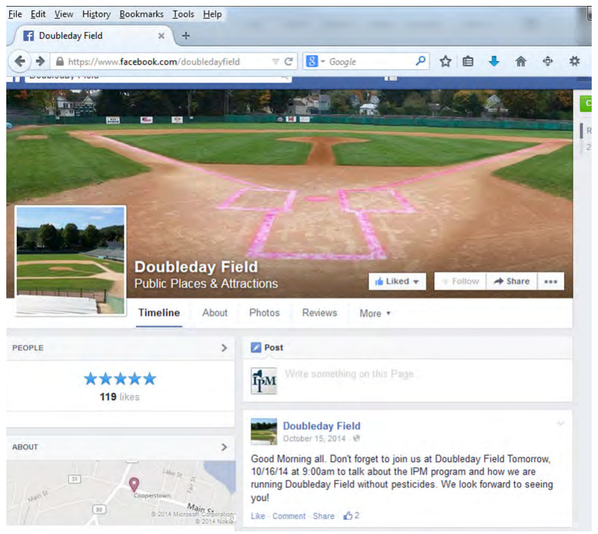
Looking into the future…

It is clear that acceptable playing conditions can be achieved without the use of pesticides during a good year; however, the conducive conditions of 2014 also masked consequences that might have become evident due to the lack of appropriate equipment and staffing.

A commitment to pesticide free maintenance must be coupled with a commitment to providing the resources needed to allow all cultural practices to be completed at the appropriate time.



Mowing guides help visitors learn about proper mowing.



Social media is being used to update visitors on IPM efforts.

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