

# CITY OF BENICIA PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

## MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES FOR SOFTBALL & BASEBALL FIELDS

### INFIELD TREATMENT & DRAGGING

1. Remove the bases and any other debris from the infield like sticks, rocks, or grass clippings.
2. Lightly moisten the infield skin or dirt area in preparation for dragging.
3. Nail/spike drag slowly (once or twice a week, especially after rain).
4. Slowly drag the field with a metal mat drag. This loosens the surface and levels and low spots. Keep the drag at least 6 inches from the grass edge to prevent lip build up. (Cover as much of the area as possible.)
5. After practices if there is no time to drag, rake around each base and put dirt back in low areas. This helps with the areas in front of second and first base where kids tend to slide a lot.

### Tips & Hints

- ❖ Change the direction and starting location of dragging frequently to prevent buildup at the same places. Dragging in a circular pattern is also helpful in preventing buildups and for distributing the infield mix evenly. In addition this will also allow you to finish on opposite sides so there is not a huge dirt build up on one side of the field where you stop the drag each time.
- ❖ Use a field rake along the grass edge to level it. If dirt gets on the grass area, use a plastic fan rake to get it out.
- ❖ Don't just drag before practice or a game: drag afterwards and you will have a better field. If you do not, the overnight moisture or rain will harden foot marks and you will have to work harder the next day.

### PITCHER'S MOUND

1. Sweep or rake the loose material from the landing area and top of the mound. This allows the hard ground to be exposed. (The landing area is the place where the pitcher lands with his lead foot.)
2. Lightly moisten the exposed hard ground and the loose material to ensure the dirt will bind when packed back into the holes. Let it set and absorb for a few minutes if you can.
3. Rake the loose, but moistened material back into the holes.
4. \*(Use fresh clay whenever possible when tamping: Turface makes a great top dressing for the mound.)
5. Tamp the loose dirt or clay into the ground. It helps to put a towel over the area you are going to tamp so the dirt/clay does not stick to the tamp.
6. Rake down or sweep the newly repaired areas as well as the rest of the mound.
7. Water the entire pitcher's area.
8. Once the pitcher's mound is completely prepared for the game, you can cover it with a tarp to maintain proper moisture level.
9. It is recommended that this process is done the evening before games to allow for the clay or loose dirt to harden overnight.

## **HOME PLATE AREA**

1. Rake the loose material from the batter's box and catcher's box. This allows the hard ground to be exposed.
2. Lightly moisten the exposed hard ground and the loose material to ensure the dirt will bind when packed back into the holes. Let it set and absorb for a few minutes if you can.
3. Use clay whenever possible, especially if the hole gets big, to properly build it back up.
4. Rake the loose, but moistened material back in the holes.
5. Tamp this loose dirt into the ground. Use a tamp or the smooth back of a field rake.
6. Rake down the newly repaired areas as well as the rest of the home plate area.
7. Water the entire area.
8. Once the home plate area is completely prepared for the game, you can cover it with a tarp to maintain a proper moisture level.
9. Using mats over the batter's box area during batting practice will also help greatly in keeping the box level.
10. \*(Do not just fill in the foot holes with dry dirt. That does not help. Unless... your sprinklers totally soak the dirt area at night for at least 20 minutes and then you have hot, sunny weather the next day to bake and harden the dirt. Otherwise, just filling the holes with dry dirt is worthless. Nobody wants to use that - it disintegrates after a couple batters and does not provide good footing.)

## **BASE PATH AREA**

1. It is best to maintain as much of the base path by hand as possible
2. It is okay to walk a smaller drag, but make sure that the drag does not overlap the grass area which can damage the grass and cause a lip or ridge at the edge of the grass. Rakes can also be used on the base paths.
3. Rakes can go closer to the grass edge than a drag. When raking, be sure to go up and down the baseline, not across the base path.