



## MAINTENANCE PLANNER

# Action Plan

A regular schedule for care and maintenance will ensure a long and useful life for your courts.

BY MARY HELEN SPRECHER

► Ah, tennis court care and maintenance. It's not a sexy topic, but it is a necessary one. And at a time when budgets are tight and court owners want to squeeze as much play as possible out of courts, it is care and maintenance that does the heavy lifting when it comes to making courts last.

To maximize the useful life of any type of court, owners and facility managers should implement a regular schedule of maintenance. Regular inspection of the court and repair of minor irregularities is more cost-effective than allowing the court to deteriorate to the point where it requires major repair or reconstruction. But even with regular maintenance, all courts will need some kind of repair over time.

Court maintenance falls into two categories: Regular maintenance

that goes on throughout the season (including some tasks that are carried out each day, as well as weekly and monthly maintenance), and seasonal maintenance that is done once a year. But whatever the type of maintenance, owners and managers should develop a maintenance plan, ensure that maintenance is performed at timely intervals, and keep records of maintenance procedures and conditions and of any problems.

The schedule and scope of work that is to be done will be dictated by the type of court surface you have, the amount and type of use, player conduct and weather conditions. If you're finding that excessive maintenance is consistently needed, it could indicate more serious problems.

What follows is a synopsis of basic maintenance practices, along with an

For facilities to look and play their best, managers must ensure that maintenance is performed at timely intervals.

Annual Maintenance Planner chart that shows regular maintenance intervals for all types of tennis courts, and includes court accessories, equipment structures and other information. (The chart appears in the *Tennis Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual*, published every three years by the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) and the USTA, and is reproduced here with permission.)

Detailed information about court maintenance can be found in the *Tennis Courts* manual, which is available from at the ASBA website, [www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org). Another essential resource is a knowledgeable court contractor who can help answer questions and address any problems.

### Every Day, Every Surface

The most important step in maintaining all types of court surfaces is to keep them clean by removing debris immediately and by spot-cleaning spills as soon as they occur. You can practice preventive maintenance by prohibiting food and beverages (except water, of course) on the court area and by prohibiting smoking on the court.

Provide wastebaskets to encourage players and spectators to keep the courts clean. And importantly, empty the wastebaskets and recycling containers regularly to encourage their use—no one likes to see or deal with overflowing trash bins. Pick up stray balls, ball cans and metal ball-can tops, which can damage the court surface, become a tripping hazard and make the court area unsightly.

### Develop a Plan

Because personnel can change from



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year to year, develop an appropriate maintenance plan that shows what needs to be done and when—as well as any problems reported, and actions taken. That plan should be kept on file by the club manager, as well as the tennis pro, court manager and any grounds maintenance staff.

Remember that a maintenance plan is only good if it is followed. Simply developing one won't guarantee success, but investing the time in following it can pay dividends in the longevity of your facility.

### Keep Equipment in Good Condition

The surface of the court isn't the only thing that needs regular upkeep. Any checklist for court maintenance should include inspection and repair (or replacement) of related equipment, including:

- Tennis nets (including net fabric, headband and center strap)
- Net posts (test the winding mechanism)
- Lighting
- Fencing (including rails)
- Divider curtains (fabric as well as sliding mechanism)
- Windscreen (fabric and ties)
- Court benches/Furniture
- Drainage
- Irrigation
- Landscaping features

Check on all items regularly—at least once a week—and address any problems immediately. Don't wait for players to notice them and complain.

At the end of the playing season, inspect all court equipment and order any replacement parts so that the equipment can be repaired during

the off-season. If new equipment is needed, the end of the season may be a good time to shop for bargains.

### Hard Court Maintenance

Hard courts include asphalt and concrete tennis courts, generally covered with tennis-specific acrylic coatings. For pre-season maintenance, clean the surface of all debris using a leaf blower or broom. If stubborn stains remain, ask your court contractor to recommend a next step, based on your surfacing product. Getting professional advice is better than making a mistake that damages or discolors the coating.

If asphalt courts have cracks, either around the net posts or anywhere else on the surface, consult your contractor. Cracks may be harmless, or they may be a symptom of a more





serious problem. Do not purchase a crack filler without professional advice, since not all products are suitable for court use.

Once the season is under way, keep an eye on the surface. Keep it free of debris and look for chips, cracks, peeling or other imperfections. Hard courts often show wear along the baseline and, sometimes, at the net.

Since hard courts are, for the most part, non-porous, it is advisable to have equipment available to help remove surface water after cleaning or after rain. This includes rubber squeegees, foam rollers or water absorbent drums. Inspect all equipment and make sure it is in good repair since a damaged piece of equipment can damage your surface.

#### **Fast-Dry and Clay Court Maintenance**

If your courts are made of soft, granular material, either fast-dry or clay, maintenance is something that must take place not only throughout the playing season, but to a certain extent, throughout the day. Courts need regular brooming, watering and rolling to maintain playability.

Spring maintenance for fast-dry courts (in areas where courts have been closed for the winter season) includes patching, top-dressing and compaction, as well as re-installing line tapes. A court contractor can provide guidance as to how much material is needed for a facility, and how to address any problems that have occurred during the downtime. Optimum playability of the courts throughout the season depends on having a significant investment of time and effort early on; cutting corners only results in problems that come back to haunt the facility.

Similarly, the difficulty, or ease, of maintenance and the general condition of clay courts throughout the year largely depends on the quality of pre-season maintenance. A well-



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defined plan will include making sure a court is dry, as well as rolling, raking/scarifying and the addition of new clay (as well as any other material added during this process), compaction and the application of new lines.

#### **Grass and Synthetic Turf Courts**

Grass and synthetic turf courts also need care prior to, and throughout, each playing season. Grass courts will need to be rolled (to restore planarity following any heaving that may have occurred during the winter freeze/thaw process), and later, will need to be fertilized, mowed and lined. A more detailed maintenance plan can be found in the *Tennis Courts* manual.

Synthetic turf courts should be inspected for any problems, such as standing water or issues in the turf itself, such as splitting or unevenness

in the surface. An experienced tennis court contractor should be contacted to address any issues. Keep courts clean throughout the season to avoid any issues with materials such as dirt, seeds or other debris.

The most important investment you'll make in your facility is the investment of time. By monitoring court conditions and paying close attention to anything out of the ordinary, it is possible to catch problems before they escalate. ■

*To order a copy of the latest Tennis Courts: Construction & Maintenance Manual, visit [www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org). The 272-page manual includes chapters on facility development, court construction, design, surfacing systems, fencing, drainage, lighting, accessories, amenities, maintenance and more.*

# Annual Maintenance Planner

|                                   | Pre-Season  | As Required  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Court Surfaces (outdoor):</b>  |   |  |
| Acrylic                           | Power wash, clean & fill cracks<br>Check for birdbaths, repair as req'd.  | Clean off spills and other contaminants. Check for surface cracking.<br>Sweep or blow clean after heavy rain.          |
| Fast-Dry                          | Remove dead material, scarify,<br>topdress, roll, install lines.  | Broom court and brush lines. Roll. Minor patching, as req'd.   |
| Sand-Filled Turf                  | Powerbroom. Remove algae.<br>Apply sand topdressing as req'd.   | Repair as required in heavily used areas.  |
| Grass                             | Roll and fertilize grass.<br>Gradually mow to playing height.   | Fill/repair divets and gouges in grass. Line courts.<br>Apply fertilizer, soil amendments, pesticides.                 |
| <b>Court Surfaces (indoor)</b>    |   |  |
| Acrylic                           | Power wash surface.<br>Clean and fill cracks or surface tears.  | Clean off spills and other contaminants. Water vacuum or water brush surface.  |
| Fast-Dry                          | Deep scarify surface crust as req'd, grade.<br>Top dress w/surface material as req'd.                             | Broom court and brush lines. Fill low spots and reset lines.   |
| Infilled Turf                     | Power broom court surface.<br>Apply sand topdressing as req'd.  | Replace sand as required in heavily used areas. Check for tears or loose seams.  |
| <b>Court Accessories</b>          |   |  |
| Nets                              | Install net, adjust height and tension.   | Clean headband, net and center strap.  |
| Net Posts                         | Clean out sleeves if removed. Paint as req'd. Install<br>posts and lubricate mechanisms and sleeves.              | Check for cracking and repair as needed around net posts.  |
| Fencing                           | Check that frame and fabric are<br>secure and free from hazards.  | Inspect frame, hardware, and footings. Repair as required or replace<br>damaged elements. Checkgate swings, lubricate. |
| Windscreens                       | Install windscreens.  | Replace damaged panels.  |
| Irrigation-Above Surface          | Turn on water supply, test system, set<br>meters, set timer clocks. Check and<br>replace zone valves as required. | Adjust timer clocks to changing seasonal usage water requirements.   |
| Irrigation -Subsurface            | Set level.  | Monitor and adjust level. Replace metering devices.  |
| Lights (Indoor)                   | Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit.  | Check and record light level readings.   |
| Lights (Outdoor)                  | Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit,<br>set timer clocks. Check and record<br>light level readings.             | Check for nicks or scratches, paint as required to prevent rusting.  |
| Court Maintenance Equipment       | Clean, lubricate, tune-up, test.  | Check for nicks or scratches, paint to prevent rusting.  |
| <b>Court Buildings</b>            |   |  |
| Air Structures                    | Clean fabric, erect structure, test all<br>systems/blower. Review emergency<br>staff procedures.                  |  |
| Metal Buildings                   | Check and test all HVAC systems.  | Check safety padding. Clear gutters, check for any roof leakage.   |
| Fabric Frame                      | Inspect metal framework, joints and<br>fasteners.   | Inspect and clean building exterior.   |
| <b>Related Facility Concerns:</b> |   |  |
| Drainage                          | Check systems, clear structures and<br>pipes.   | Clear tops of drains and swales. Repair damaged structures or pipes.   |
| Landscaping                       | Prune back overgrowth and roots under courts,<br>fertilize, install seasonal plantings, mulch beds.               | Change seasonal plantings, fertilize or prune as required.   |



# Annual Maintenance Planner (cont.)

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| Daily   | Weekly   | Post Season  | Long Term Planning  |
|---|--|--|---|
|   |  |  |   |
|   | Sweep or blow surface clean.   | Sweep or blow surface clean.<br>Clean and fill cracks.   | Plan for resurfacing every 5-8 years.   |
| Water (sometimes twice a day).<br>Broom and brush court lines.                | Sweep surface and clean debris.<br>Roll court if required.                   | Take up lines or weight them if court subject to freeze thaw cycles.   | Check surface thickness yearly. Re-leveling may be required if court has eroded. A new lift may be req'd every 5-7 years. |
| Sweep surface clean of debris.  | Brush surface (more frequently if req'd).<br>Check for tears or loose seams. | Clean court surface and apply algaecide and fungicide.   | Plan to resurface every 12-20 years.  |
| Water surface, mow if required.<br>Rotate court position or let court "rest". |  | Aerate, dethatch, reseed, and fertilize.   |   |
|   |  |  |   |
| Vacuum or sweep surface.  |  | Sweep or blow surface clean.<br>Clean and fill cracks and surface tears.                                     | Plan for resurfacing every 3-6 years.   |
| Lightly hand water court as req'd.<br>Broom and brush court lines.            |  |  |   |
| Sweep surface clean of debris.  | Brush surface (more frequently if req'd.).                                   | Clean court surface.   | Plan to replace surface every 10-15 years.  |
|   |  |  |   |
|   | Check net tension and height.  | Remove nets (or loosen tension).<br>Check cables & replace as req'd. store.                                  |   |
|   |  | Remove posts, cap sleeves, lubricate mechanisms, and store or cover.   |   |
|   |  |  | Replace fabric every 12-18 years.   |
| Check that windscreens are securely fastened to fence framework.              | Hose down or wash windscreens as required.                                   | Tag locations, clean & store.<br>Measure and order replacement panels.                                       | Plan to replace every 3-5 years.  |
| Check and record water usage.   | Check and adjust head alignment and performance, check and clean filters.    | Turn off water supply, drain and blow out system, repair equipment as req'd.                                 |   |
|   | Add fungicide.   |  |   |
|   |  | Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit minimum every 6 months if year round.                                  | Replace lamps every 2 years indoors.  |
|   |  | Clean lenses and check wiring/conduit minimum every 6 months if year round.                                  | Replace lamps every 4-5 years outdoors.   |
|   |  | Clean, lubricate, order replacement parts if required, repair, store. Drain gasoline or water if applicable. |   |
|   |  |  |   |
| Record pressure, temperature, weather conditions, inspect for leakage.        | Test emergency back-up system.<br>Test emergency exits.                      | Clean fabric, take down, store, winterize mechanical equipment.  | Plan for fabric replacement every 10-15 years.  |
|   |  | Clean HVAC filters and vents, inspect roof and insulation systems.   | Plan on roof replacement 15-25 years depending on system.   |
|   | Test emergency exits.  |  |   |
|   |  |  |   |
|   | Inspect courts and surroundings for drainage problems or erosion, repair.    | Check systems, clear structures and pipes.   |   |
| Water plantings.  | Trim grass, sweep walks, check plants for invasive insects or diseases.      | Prune back overgrowth, fertilize plantings, mulch planting beds.   |   |