

What The Packers Do To Keep Lambeau Field Special



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Look, but don't touch the grass!

You'll not see a more attractive sward of [Kentucky bluegrass](#) anywhere. That it remains as lovely, green and weed-free even through the first months of winter in frigid Wisconsin is incredible. Even more remarkable, it gets an incredible amount of punishment. I'm referring to the playing field at Lambeau Stadium in Green Bay, of course.

Whether you maintain grass in a busy park, on a college campus or on sports fields, you can appreciate the maxim – "Grass Grows by the Inch, But Dies by the Foot." In this case, by the feet of 300-pound football players.

"Don't touch that grass," Grant, our tour guide and a life-long season ticket holder, warned sternly as we came out of the tunnel from the Packers locker room. "If everybody who came here took a bit of the field we wouldn't have any field left by the end of the season."

A small group of us green industry journalists got to check out the field thanks to Grant, our drill-sergeant gruff but also entertaining guide, and the generosity of [The Ariens Company](#), headquartered in nearby Brillion, Wisconsin.

There are a lot of things you can do at Lambeau Field – dine in a high-end restaurant, book parties and corporate events, visit the Green Bay Packers Museum, the Packers Pro Shop or do a Field Tour as we did.

But, in the end, the thousands of people that come to historic [Lambeau Field](#) want to see its beautiful playing field. It's unique in many ways and always in great shape thanks to the hard work and dedication of [Allen Johnson](#), the sports field manager at Lambeau for the past 21 years.



Photo: Ronnie Hall

In 2007, the Packers installed an entirely new playing surface, including a completely new [drainage](#) and heating system. It was a huge project. All existing levels of the field were removed so that it could be rebuilt level-by-level.

Construction of the new field began with a clay sub-grade level, compacted and graded (with a 0.6 percent slope), including drain tile, irrigation pipe and thermostat wiring for the heating system. Then contractors installed 5.5 inches of pea gravel and 43 miles of 3/4-inch tubing for the heating system. The underground heating system can maintain a root-zone temperature of over 55 degrees to keep the ground from freezing during December and January as the regular football season finishes.

But it's the third level of the field that gives the turfgrass durability. Into the 12 inches of root-zone sand and Kentucky bluegrass turf, a huge machine stitched DD GrassMaster's synthetic fibers (about 20 million stitches) into the surface. Fibers, comprising about 3 percent of the field, extend approximately seven inches below the surface, are exposed approximately one inch above the surface and are spaced every three-quarters of an inch.

But how do you keep the turfgrass growing during Green Bay's short and often cloudy fall and winter days? You use grow lights, of course. Each evening, [banks of grow lights](#) are set up on the field to provide "sunlight" to the Kentucky bluegrass.

Now in its 61st year, historic Lambeau Field is on just about every NFL fan's bucket list to visit – and no wonder. Situated within the smallest city in professional football (est. population 106,000), the Packers are of the most storied football teams ever, winning 10 NFL Championships including five Super Bowls.

As previously mentioned, there is enough to do at Lambeau Field to fill an entire afternoon. The one thing you can't do though (as much as you might like to) is to kneel down along the sideline and run your hand over the smooth, even carpet of the Kentucky bluegrass playing field.

Remember what Grant told our group – "Don't touch the grass!"