

Turf News

A publication of Turfgrass Producers International

The only magazine devoted *exclusively* to turfgrass production

Protecting *Your Investments*



**Natural
Grass**
#KeepItREALTM

IN THIS ISSUE

2019 Conference Recap

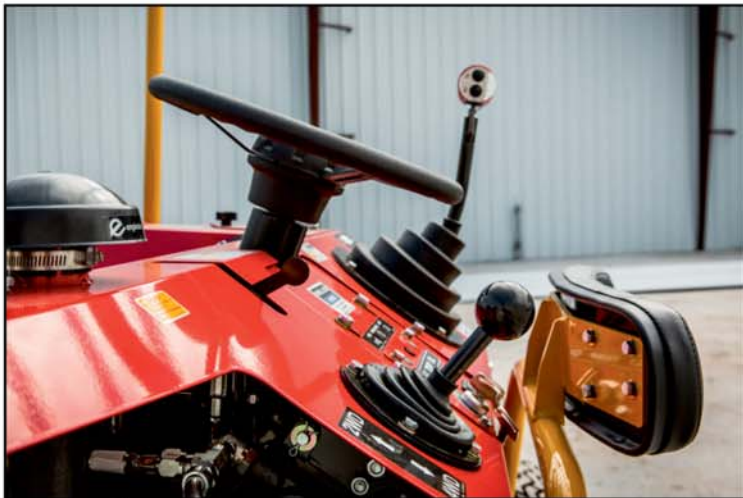
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Scene from TPI's 2019 Conference
Photo by Steve Trusty

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IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE ARTICLES

FOCUS: Protecting Your Investments

10 Protecting Your Investments from Natural Disasters

Pick up tips for proactive preparedness and savvy post-event strategies.

12 After the Fire—Overcoming Tragedy

Grassland Oregon, Inc. shares how they kept going after a tragic fire last August.

20 TPI Market Research Explores What it Takes to Keep It REAL!

Learn what research revealed in developing the #KeepItREAL™ campaign, why it matters, and how it can help your business.

24 2019 Conference Recap

Whether you made it to Charlotte or not, you'll want to review highlights of the Conference.

34 Weed Control Lessons Learned in 2018

University of Tennessee research provides new insight into weed control in turfgrass.

38 Pivot Point—Turn On A Dime Without Sacrificing Results

Shawn Rhodes offers strategies to help your business quickly adapt to change to achieve success.

44 Make your Plans for Minneapolis in July

Get a preview of the many reasons to attend TPI's Summer Convention & Field Day July 23-25.

48 Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company

Meet our 2019 Field Day hosts and learn about their multi-faceted family business.

54 Sara Lechlinder Awarded Dr. Henry W. Indyk Scholarship

Meet the recipient of the four-year scholarship sponsored by The Lawn Institute.s.

56 Krysta Bouchard Awarded Dr. Henry W. Indyk Scholarship

Meet the recipient of the one-year scholarship sponsored by The Lawn Institute.

59 Rooted in Research—Do North American Consumers Prefer Low-Input Turfgrasses for their Home Lawns?

This report from a group of researchers provides background and insight on what homeowners want regarding their lawns.

DEPARTMENTS

President's TURF.....	2	Classified Ads.....	70
Executive Director's TURF.....	4	Advertisers Index.....	71
TPI News.....	6	Welcome New & Returning Members....	71
The Lawn Institute News.....	8	Turf Industry Calendar.....	72
Association Updates.....	58	BONUS	
Happenings.....	64-65	Thank You TLI Donors	8
Turf Industry News.....	66 & 68	TLI Helpful Hints Pass-Along.....	9

PRESIDENT'S TURF



Eric Heuver

It's Your Membership— Make the Most of It!

Greetings all. Hopefully everyone's as busy as we are here in Alberta and making the most of the good weather. Sometimes during the busy season, we struggle to make time to step back and reflect, but the upcoming TPI events give us a great excuse to do just that. Check out the Summer Conference & Field Day in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 23-25, and TPI's 2020 International Education Conference & Field Day in Orlando, Florida, February 17-20.

Personally, I've learned as much over a beer in the bar after attending talks and seminars as I have at the actual educational events. Maybe it will be figuring out the solution to a problem you've been struggling with, or a new idea that makes your business more efficient. Maybe it will be a networking connection that sparks a life-long friendship. And maybe it's all of this and more.

Packed with great events and great education sessions, TPI's 2019 International Education Conference in Charlotte was excellent! Sharing it with more than 450 TPI members and guests made it even better. Nathan Gill, my company's vice president of operations, attended with me, giving us the opportunity to take in more of the education sessions and pick up more ideas to share with our staff.

For a refresher, catch the recap of Conference events; check out Pivot Point tips from keynote speaker Shawn Rhodes; and learn more about the new Keep It REAL campaign to promote natural grass—all in this issue. And if you missed an education session or would like to review one you attended, you can see them on TPI's Turfgrass Education Center on the TPI website.

All of that is just a part of what TPI membership brings you. With the launch of the Keep It REAL campaign you'll be seeing new tools in the Member-Only Toolbox that you can use in your own business. Working together, telling the same positive story of the benefits of natural grass in our businesses, and incorporating #KeepItReal in our companies' social media outreach, the impact will be so much greater. Just think of the power of delivering a united, positive message to the decision-makers world-wide.

So get out of your box and just do it. Attend TPI events. Make the investment of time and money. You'll be refreshed and recharged, and you'll bring something back that will more than pay for your investment. If not you, send one or two of your key people—your son or daughter; your farm manager; your marketing manager; your operations manager—the people that you think can run your business better than you can. Let them get out and see things. Let them make the connections, make the friends, and come back refreshed and revived with great new ideas to share.

It's your membership. Make the most of it!

All the Best,

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one-trick pony noun

Definition of one-trick pony

: one that is skilled in only one area

also : one that has success only once

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S TURF



Casey Reynolds, PhD

TPI is Keepin' it REAL!

Wow, thanks to all of our members for making TPI 2019 in Charlotte a successful event! More than 450 TPI members and guests descended on uptown Charlotte from February 18 to 20 to visit with friends and colleagues, sit in on educational sessions, visit with vendors during two trade show timeframes, and enjoy The Lawn Institute dinner and auction at the NASCAR Hall of Fame. We certainly enjoyed having you there and thanks for your support!

One of the new items that TPI launched for 2019 at the International Education Conference is our #KeepItREAL campaign to promote natural grass. If you recall from 2018, TPI funded market and consumer research to determine what messages resonate with leaders in cities, parks and recreation departments, schools, etc. when choosing between natural grass and artificial turf. Through this research, we learned about many of the driving factors and considerations made during the decision-making process and what TPI can do to help promote natural grass.

One of the numerous results of this research was a #KeepItREAL slogan that was developed in coordination with TPI members and FleishmanHillard that members can use to share and promote natural grass in their own area. We have uploaded high-resolution graphics to the TPI Member-Only Toolkit that you can use on promotional materials, social media, and more. We will also be uploading KeepItREAL items including can koozies, stickers, etc. into our online store which can be accessed through our new TPI website that will be launched later this spring. We are excited about sharing these new resources and will do our best to promote natural grass by telling everyone to #KeepItREAL! We certainly encourage you to join us! See the article on page 21 for more information on Keep It REAL.

We all know the many benefits of natural grass, so let's continue to share this information with the general public as well as policy-makers. In the meantime, TPI

is also funding initiatives to create new Safety & Health fact sheets as well as updated Environmental Benefits fact sheets on natural grass that will be released as they become available. One item to be on the lookout for soon is a review of recent research published in the American Journal of Sports Medicine that demonstrates increased injury rates among NFL athletes when playing on synthetic turf. These data were collected over the course of the 2012-16 NFL seasons and are an analysis of every lower body injury on natural grass and synthetic turf during that time. After reading this research paper, it's even more clear that natural grass is the way to go!

So, as we move forward in 2019 and beyond, let's encourage everyone to Keep It REAL by choosing natural grass. The benefits are endless!

Cheers,



**Natural
Grass**
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Turfgrass Producers International: @TPITurfTalk
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TPI NEWS

WHAT'S HAPPENING **NOW?**

TPI MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORIES IN THE MAIL

The 2019 TPI membership directories are scheduled to be mailed by early May. Keep an eye on your mailbox for this valuable resource listing all TPI members!

REGISTER NOW FOR THE TPI 2019 SUMMER CONVENTION & FIELD DAY



Registration is open now at www.TurfGrassSod.org for the 2019 Summer Convention & Field Day, July 23-25 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The event will consist of a selection of tours (including the Toro manufacturing facility, the Minnesota Vikings outdoor practice facility, the University of Minnesota turfgrass research farm, and more!), exhibit hall time, and the Field Day at Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company! See page 44 for more Summer Convention information! Also see page 48 for an introduction to our Field Day hosts.

OFFICIAL CONFERENCE HOTEL FOR SUMMER CONVENTION

Make your reservations now for the Summer Convention & Field Day at the official conference hotel. To reserve a room, call the Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis at +1- 877-803-7534 and be sure to tell them you are with TPI to receive the discounted rate. Reservations can also be made online at: <https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/MSPRB/G-TPIM>

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BLOOMINGTON, MN, 55425

*Reservations must be made at the Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis by Monday, July 1, 2019. Please note that once the room block is full, the rate and/or rooms may no longer be available, even if prior to July 1, 2019, so be sure to make your reservations early.



TPI NEWS

WHAT TO KNOW

TURFGRASS EDUCATION CENTER—LEARN ON YOUR OWN TIME



Did you miss one of the outstanding educational sessions at February's 2019 International Education Conference? Would you like to review the content you heard? You can see all the 2019 sessions, as well as many from other recent conferences, on TPI's Turfgrass Education Center. This is your opportunity to learn!

<http://videos.turfgrasssod.org/product-category/channel/turfgrass-education-center-tec>.

YOU MAY BE ON SMUGMUG!

Did you know TPI members can view photos from past TPI events on smug mug?

Visit <https://tpiphotos.smugmug.com/> to take a trip down memory lane!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

TPI'S 2020 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE & FIELD DAY IN ORLANDO! FEBRUARY 17-20

TPI members will descend on the Hilton Orlando Buena Vista Palace, February 17-20, for a week of learning, networking, and making new friends during the 2020 International Education Conference & Field Day. The week will begin with optional social tours and a clay shoot to benefit The Lawn Institute and will include two days of education and exhibit hall time. The annual Field Day will be hosted by H&H Sod Company, Inc. Our headquarters hotel is located directly across the street from the exciting Disney Springs area and is an official Walt Disney World Hotel®, giving attendees who choose to include a visit to Disney World in their travel plans access to exclusive Disney park benefits, including FastPass+ early planning, Extra Magic Hours, and continuous shuttles to the parks. Registration and hotel reservations will open in mid-September.



DISCOVER THE MAGIC.

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The Lawn Institute sincerely thanks ALL members that have already donated to The Foundation in 2019. In recognition of the Forever Green, Gold Benefactor, Green Partner and 500 Club members, the lists below recognize those who have donated as of 4/1/2019.

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For more information on how you can support TLI and make a donation in 2019 go to: www.TheLawnInstitute.org/ and click on SUPPORT TLI. Contributions help support turfgrass research, education, scholarships, and the campaign to promote natural grass. Donations made in the calendar year will receive personal recognition in our publications and in The Lawn Institute booth.

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HELPFUL HINTS FROM THE LAWN INSTITUTE



MOWING AND TURFGRASS HEALTH



Few things are as important to turfgrass as proper mowing. It is one of the most frequently performed cultural practices that has the ability to make an immediate impact on the beauty of a lawn, athletic field, or other turfgrass site. When walking into a baseball, football, or soccer stadium and getting that first glimpse of the playing surface, what stands out the most? Is it the latest fertilizer application or irrigation cycle? The soil pH or particle size analysis? Probably not. Many fans would tell you it's the intricate mowing patterns or field uniformity and consistency that hits them first.

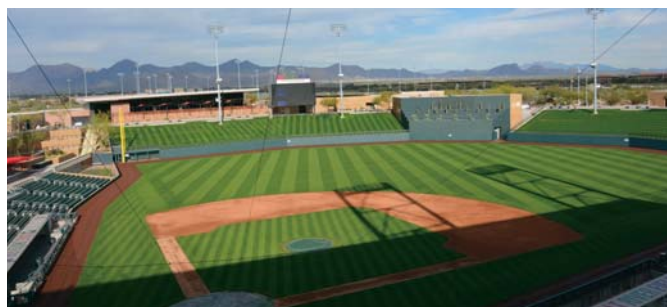
Turfgrass is only turfgrass because it is mowed. With over 10,000 species of grasses in the world, only about 30 to 40 of them form dense turf when mowed. These species, which evolved under grazing from animals, create the fabric that is found in many urban landscapes, holding disturbed soils in place, capturing stormflow and rainwater, cooling our homes, creating fresh oxygen, and providing a safe place for kids and athletes to play. Perennial turfgrasses are one of the few species of plants that can tolerate mowing, and it is because of their adaptation to regular defoliation, aka grazing.

Turfgrasses have a recommended mowing height range that varies by species. For most home lawns, these height ranges vary from 1 inch to 3.5 inches (2.5 cm to 8.9 cm). The frequency at which lawns require mowing typically increases as mowing height decreases. This is because it is important to not mow off more than one-third of the leaf blade at any one time. Mowing frequency also depends on temperature, moisture, fertility, and any other factor impacting growth. Cool-season grasses (bluegrasses,

fescues, ryegrasses, bentgrasses, etc.) grow faster and require more mowing during the spring and fall months than the summer and winter months; while warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, St. Augustinegrass, etc.) require more frequent mowing in the summer months. As a result, it is important to adjust mowing frequency, and perhaps even height, according to growth rate.

It also is important not to overlook the physiological impacts of mowing on turfgrass growth and health. While mowing is a good thing and necessary for turfgrass growth, any type of defoliation (mowing or grazing, for example) reduces the amount of leaf surface that serves as the photosynthetic apparatus for plants. Leaves, after all, capture sunlight to serve as energy for converting atmospheric carbon dioxide to sugars and carbohydrates for growth and storage in roots and stems. Mowing grasses too short or too frequently can reduce this capacity and be detrimental to plant health, especially during stressful periods. However, mowing too high results in turfgrass leaves that shade each other out, which reduces lawn density and traffic tolerance.

This makes it important to find the balance of the proper mowing height and frequency that encourages lateral growth while also leaving enough leaf tissue in place to support photosynthesis. Other tips for healthy mowing include using sharp blades, not mowing when lawns are excessively wet or drought stressed, and leaving behind clippings when possible, especially when using mulching kits. Finally, who doesn't recognize the smell of fresh cut grass? From weekend warrior to professional athletic field manager, tips for proper mowing allow everyone to enjoy fresh natural grass.



For more information on lawn care and helpful "How to" tips, visit The Lawn Institute at:
www.TheLawnInstitute.org.

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENTS FROM NATURAL DISASTERS

By Suz Trusty

Weather patterns world-wide have been changing, with more “100-year” floods, wide-ranging hurricanes, tornados, typhoons, tsunamis, blizzards, ice storms, and wild fires than in previous years. Abnormal has become the new normal.

That means you need to not only take a proactive approach to preparedness, but also to think way out of the box in determining what that means for your business and your employees. What constituted an adequate level of preparedness in the past may not be sufficient for tomorrow’s natural disaster.

The article, “Protecting Your Investments—Before and After a Disaster,” in the May/June 2018 issue of *Turf News* provides a good overview of the basics to consider. Building on that requires taking a hard look at the “what ifs” that could, under extraordinary circumstances, impact your business assets and operations.

Consider the Extremes

The extreme weather event, dubbed a “Bomb Cyclone,” swept across the Midwest in mid-March while the ground was still frozen; many areas had experienced no snow melt yet, after a winter of exceptionally heavy snows; and ice on many of the rivers was up to 24-inches thick. It hit as a blizzard with heavy snow and strong winds, followed by warming and heavy rainfall. Dams were topped or destroyed, levees were breached or failed, and rivers reached flood stage heights never seen before.

One of the storm issues that made the national news was the flooding at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska. Much of the water that inundated Offutt made its way there through the farm of TPI member Robert Meisinger, owner of Fast Grass in Plattsmouth, NE, just south of Omaha.

The Platte, Missouri and Elkhorn Rivers all converge in that area. Typically, Meisinger would track the weather reports and watch the river levels, anticipating a warning of a day or two for damage-control preparation.

This year, the flooding happened much faster. The water from the three rivers became one massive river, something that had never happened before. One factor contributing to that was the collapse of the Spencer Dam on the Niobrara River in Northern Nebraska, near the South Dakota border. The Niobrara River feeds into the Missouri River. Media outlets have now reported that huge chunks of ice—some



When the water had receded enough, Meisinger and staff could wade to the buildings to assess the damage.

weighing as much as a full-sized pickup—played a leading role in the collapse of that 29-foot-high dam. The collapse unleashed a wall of water 11 to 15 feet in height.

Meisinger says, “If we had gotten word about the Spencer Dam collapsing earlier, we might have been able to anticipate a high level of flooding and would have moved more equipment off the property.” However, in retrospect he felt, with the wide-ranging flooding, areas that might have been considered a safe place for the equipment, even in abnormal circumstances, probably would not have been.

At the height of the flooding, his property was entirely inundated by water. As of April 1, Meisinger reported that he had 290 acres of sod production fields that had been under water anywhere from two to four days, that were now exposed. Most of that flooded area, he thought was, for the most part, in good shape. He still had 210 acres of production fields underwater. That includes some ground on the Iowa side of the river, but because the bridges had been washed out by the flooding and alternate routes were not accessible because they were under water, he had not been able to get to them to see the extent of that damage.



Cleanup will be a slow process, as staff members armed with rakes were discovering.

His buildings—the sales facility, the shop and storage facilities—were all inundated with water. Two grain bins also were flooded, and ag officials were telling farmers across the region that there was no way to salvage any of the grains impacted by the flood waters due to potential pollutants as well as the possibility of mold developing. Meisinger’s realistic estimate at that point was that 60 percent of his assets were impacted.

Last year Meisinger harvested 257 acres of sod; he sold 300 acres the previous year. He feels that he should have enough sod to harvest to fulfill normal potential sales. He had planted more of his ground into sod anticipating a better year and thought that the prices for sod would be better than traditional row crops, such as corn, soybeans and sorghum. With all the residential and commercial property flooding across the area, the sod market could potentially be higher. And, the media reports, the ordeal is not over. In early April, Scott Dergan, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said, “We’re going to have to deal with snowmelt and water filtering through the Missouri River system for the next month or so.”

While the flooding was a heavy hit, Fast Grass is a big operation and Meisinger is cautiously optimistic. He says, “We will pull through. It’s not going to be easy, but it is doable.”

Post-Event Strategies

The immediate first step, after determining all the people that may have been involved are safe and accounted for, is assessing the damage. Before you touch anything—document it. Take videos or photos of everything all the way through the discovery, cleanup and restoration processes!

Check out the article on page 12, “After the Fire—Overcoming Tragedy,” for ideas on how to successfully face the challenges of a disastrous event.

For those dealing with the aftermath of flooding, whether it’s on your own production fields, or the natural grass areas of your customers, there are excellent resources with tips on assessing damage and taking the appropriate actions. Check out the Helpful Hints from The Lawn Institute, “Flooding and Turfgrass Health,” in the July/August 2018 issue of *TurfNews*.

In addition, Roch Gaussoin, PhD, Professor and Extension Turfgrass Specialist, and Bill Kreuser, PhD, Assistant Professor and Turfgrass Extension Specialist, both at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, issued a Turf iNfo for the North Central U.S. on March 25, 2019, in online, PDF format, titled,

“Recovery after historic flooding.” https://turf.unl.edu/turfinfo/3-25_Flood_Recovery.pdf.

Check All Available Resources

On April 1, TPI Executive Director Casey Reynolds, issued this email message: “Dear TPI Family and Friends, “As many of you know, flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and in many midwestern states have been devastating to many farms including those in the sod farming community. A near-record March snowpack and extremely wet fall and winter months have resulted in excess water with simply nowhere to go, and in Nebraska alone flooding has already caused more than \$1 billion in damage with more than 2,000 homes and 340 businesses lost.

“We extend our thoughts and prayers to the farming communities and families of the Midwest United States as they are coping with damage from historic flooding. If there is anything we can do at TPI to extend a helping hand, please let us know. We are here to support our seed and sod-farming families and communities and ask that you join us in keeping them in your thoughts and prayers during this challenging time.”

Too often, people do not know what you need until you tell them. Reach out for help to other members of the TPI family and to other individuals or companies who have the resources you need. For those with resources to share, reach out and offer them. During these stressful times of cleanup and restoration, that outreach is especially meaningful.

Suz Trusty is co-editor of *Turf News*.

All photos courtesy of Robert Meisinger of Fast Grass.

Editor’s note: If you would like a PDF version of any of the articles listed above, please send an email with your request to: suztrusty@TurfGrassSod.org.



AFTER THE FIRE—OVERCOMING TRAGEDY

By Suz Trusty

The offices of TPI supplier member, Grassland Oregon, Inc. (GO), caught fire on Sunday, August 19, 2018. The company is sharing the steps they have taken to overcome that tragedy and what they have learned through the process to help others successfully face the challenges of a disastrous event.

The timing of the fire could not have been worse from a business standpoint. GO is a breeder, producer, and provider of a wide range of seed products in the turf, forage and cover crop markets. Duane Klundt, GO's vice president of turfgrass sales for North America, says, "We were right at the beginning of the busy season, shipping a lot of seed. We do about 70 percent of our business in the fall."

Jerry Hall, GO's co-founder, president, and director of research, adds, "Most customers don't keep a lot of inventory on hand, instead relying on their suppliers to provide the seed they need when they need it. You have to be prepared to do that in our industry. We plan to get seed orders out in 48 hours." And despite the disruption of the fire, Hall reports, "We didn't miss a single shipping deadline with anyone."

The Fire

On Wednesday, August 22, 2018, Jerry Hall posted this on GO's Blog, "As many of you may know, this past weekend, our office caught on fire.

On Sunday my wife, daughter and myself decided to take my nephew Jason, who is headed off to college, out to dinner. Shortly after placing my order I received a text from Colin Scott, our field representative, that our neighbors had called him and said our office was on fire.

Leaving the family behind, I took off for the office.

Our office sits a quarter mile off the road, so I parked in the ditch and started running up the drive. About two-thirds of the way I ran out of gas and paused to take this photo, didn't look so bad. A five-inch fire hose ran up the length of the driveway.



Jerry Hall's first view of the GO office fire, the five-inch fire hose and fire trucks, didn't look too bad.

As I approached, I was stopped by a fireman and directed to the Captain. At this point I thought things still looked pretty good. The Captain stated that the fire was contained, and they were knocking down the remaining hot spots. At this time, I saw a blast of water coming up through the office roof. That's not good I thought. I asked the Captain, 'So how is it inside?'

'Not good,' he replied. 'When we approached the structure, it was too hot, so we had to cool it down before we entered. We fought it from the front door. We estimate that the temperature inside was greater than 600 degrees Fahrenheit.'

The temperature was so hot that it blew the skylights off the building. It was at this time I knew we had a problem. After a couple of hours, they had it cooled down enough so that I could approach the building and peek in through the windows. Definitely not good. The next morning, I was allowed to enter with the Marion County Fire Investigator. It got worse."



When Hall was allowed inside the office on Monday morning, he saw the devastation was extensive.

The Cloud and IT Support

Hall's August 22 Blog further reported, "I remember a long time ago that I read a book where Andy Grove, the founder of computer giant Intel, stated, 'Only the paranoid survive.' From that day forward that concept was ingrained in my business philosophy. We had contracted with a local computer IT support company, Compex, Inc., to provide us support. They would back up our server nightly and the critical files more frequently than that. At times I have complained about the cost but let me tell you, in hindsight it was money well spent.

Monday morning, I broke the news to them, 'Guys I hate to do this to you, but I want to be back up and running in 24 hours.' This being our busiest time of year we cannot afford down time. By Tuesday they had delivered a computer to Phill Lindgren, our logistics manager, at his home nearly 30



The 600-degree Fahrenheit temperatures inside the office destroyed the computers and two onsite backup servers.

miles away from our office and had him connected with a back-up server and fully operational. So, in just 24 hours our shipping was back up to speed. Pretty damn good. The folks at Compex, Inc. have my undying gratitude.

We have spent a lot of time the last couple of days looking at office space and have identified a property that we can call home for the next year as we rebuild. There is a lot of work ahead of us and our goal is to make it so that our customers experience no disruption. Your business is our number one priority.

We appreciate all of the support and kind words that we have received. There is no doubt in my mind that we will emerge as a stronger and better company. I am already thinking about the opportunities.

If you don't have off-site backup, get on it. It is critical to your business. If you are in the Willamette Valley, I highly recommend Compex, Inc., they have been fantastic and came up huge in getting us back on our feet."

Use the Power of Social Media

Word of a disaster spreads rapidly—just like a fire. Hall recommends using the power of social media to take control of the message and make sure your story is being told. On Monday, August 20, 2018, the GO team posted this message: "Yesterday the GO office caught on fire. No one was injured. Please know this will not affect our shipping/selling ability whatsoever. Business will be up & running as usual tomorrow 8/21, just from a different location. The GO Team appreciates your support as we work through this."

Also on Monday, Jerry and Don Baune, GO's co-founder, partner and sales representative for North America, were at the site, under an open-sided tent, sitting on folding chairs at a folding table, armed with their cell phones and ready to roll. Risa Demasi, GO's co-founder, partner, and director of marketing, took a photo of them and posted it on her Twitter account, @SeedNerd, "Our office... for the time being. New meaning to getting some fresh air! (smiley emoji) ... give us a call, we're having a 'fire' (fire emoji) sale (ha ha) seriously though, we'd love to have your business!



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Risa Demasi snapped this photo of Jerry Hall (right) and Don Baune (left) ready to roll on Monday morning, and tweeted it out, using the power of social media to show that, despite the fire, GO was operational and would “love to have your business.”

That was followed on Wednesday by Jerry Hall’s Blog as reported above. Leading off with the details of the fire was a psychological plus, a response to the innate curiosity of all humans and our “need to know,” while helping customers, potential customers, extended family, friends, and competitors understand that the damage had been extensive.

Even more importantly, Hall’s Blog stressed the rapid recovery, reporting the restoration of the computer system; the company was fully operational; shipping was “back up to speed,” and “your business is our number one priority.”

Rallying the Forces

Klundt says, “I got a call from Jerry Sunday night, ‘The office went up in flames. There’s nothing to come in to on Monday. We’ll hit it hard on Tuesday.’” He adds, “We all have different skills and different roles within the company. By getting our IT side operational so quickly, many people were able to do their jobs, especially those

in sales, marketing, order processing and shipping, all essential to serving our customers.”

In the meantime, major issues needed to be resolved—and quickly. Klundt says, “I was amazed by the things that Jerry thought about that I would not have. He had assessed the immediate needs we’d have and assigned specific tasks to members of the management team.”

Hall says, “We have a small, but incredible, staff. We function almost like family. And we all knew there was no time for a pity party. Everyone pitched in, doing whatever they were asked to do—and so much more—without complaint. Don and I focused on finding office space that would be workable and functional. We had the space found and rented by the following Sunday. Kyla concentrated on finding someone with the furniture we would need to have and getting it ordered and scheduled for delivery that Monday.”



Because of the potential for third-party involvement, GO’s insurance company restricted entry to the affected areas while the cause of the fire and liability for it were being investigated.



While the obvious focus was on the things vital to business operations, valuable personal items and treasured keepsakes also were destroyed.

Behind the Scenes

Hall reports, “The fire was started by an air moving fan left behind by our cleaning company that they were using to dry the carpet they had just cleaned.”

Very little was salvageable. Hall says, “If we had gone in that night or the next day, we could have salvaged some things we’d already invested in, such as seed packets. But our insurance company immediately picked up on the potential cause of the fire, and if a third party was responsible, they were going to go after them to cover the damage it caused. So everything sat in the office saturated with water and covered with soot for

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about three weeks while that issue was settled before we were allowed to move anything.”

In addition, GO was transitioning to a new computer server, so they lost two servers. Hall adds, “The other thing that exacerbated the damage was the battery backups we used for a lot of the computers. The battery backups kept the fans going so the computers kept on sucking in soot from the fire. We’re all taught we need battery backup and I never had thought of the downside of that. We opened a couple of them, and they were full of soot and dust. So we needed all new computers.”

Hall says, “Our outside IT service, Compex, Inc., does both onsite and cloud backup for us. Key critical files are backed up every two hours and the less critical files are backed up overnight.” Klundt adds, “We also can track the records of what we’ve done in the past because of Jerry’s forward thinking in making those arrangements with our IT folks.”

Hall says, “With all our data on the cloud, reconnecting was not the problem. Replacing our computers and related hardware was a bigger issue. We had to concentrate on making the rest of our operations functional, so we outsourced the computer system restoration to our IT folks giving them the okay to spend within reason. They

had some of the computers and hardware on-hand and ordered in whatever else we needed. Of course, we had to pay extra for the additional service, as well as the expense of replacing the computers, but not doing it was not an option. Because of all that, Compex, Inc. didn’t hit my goal of totally up and running again in 24 hours, but they made it within 36 hours.”

“For our business, this was the worst time for the fire to happen, but the timing was fortunate in one area—we had sent our materials off to NTEP,” says Klundt. “On the other hand, a lot of research materials we were working to coordinate for fall planting were in the building. Seed that we had gathered over time, all precisely labeled and stored on one shelf, was reduced to one big pile of seeds. We have no idea what of our research was lost in that.”

Hall adds, “The seed for all the key, critical, early-stage projects was on my desk which was four feet from the epicenter of the fire. Temperatures were well over 600 degrees Fahrenheit. Those small quantities of seed on my desk didn’t survive. That’s at least a year setback for our research.”



While the small quantities of seed for early-stage research were destroyed by the high temperatures, ironically, seed in the center of a bag of annual ryegrass survived and was sprouting.

Hall also had a large bag of annual ryegrass setting by his desk. “Ironically, four weeks after the fire, when we finally got back into the office, seed in the center of that bag was growing.”

Hall further reports, “We did need to focus on the immediate, which did slow down some of our research, and it’s not getting quite the level of love and attention that comes from being onsite.”

Two-thirds of the office, including two of the main offices and everything in them, had to be replaced. Klundt says, “Some things got so hot they melted; others were contaminated with water, ashes and soot. The first thing that we tried to find were the blueprints for the office. Both the architect and the insurance company wanted to see them, but they were in a closet that completely burned. The original architect had since gone digital and didn’t have them either.”

There was so much to sort through, GO decided to use a third party, hired by the insurance company, to do the cleanup and documentation. Hall says, “We monitored them while they were onsite, but not nearly as closely as we should have. We should have created that documentation on our own as well. They were taking photos and we thought they were photographing everything. We know there were things that they left off when it came to putting it together for the insurance company, but we can’t document it. We should have set up a system and had everything videotaped as they worked.”



Because of the timing of the fire, GO used a third party, hired by their insurance company, to do the cleanup and documentation. A lesson learned that Hall emphasizes—document everything!

They found about five filing cabinets that have essential, retrievable information in paper form. Hall says, “We’d talked about converting all of the paper files to digital format, but never made the time to do it. Now we’ll need to spend thousands of dollars to copy and store them. It would make more sense and be far easier to do the conversion as documents are created rather than doing the conversion all at once.”

Working through the compromised materials that could be examined has been time consuming, but eye-opening. Klundt says, “This fire for me was a purge. As I went through the debris, I realized how much I was keeping that I didn’t need. I’m going to do a purge every year now. It’s easier to manage 3 to 12 months of information and materials than 3 or 4 years of it.”

There were glitches. On September 5, GO had been busy reordering all the supplies lost in the fire when Office Depot cancelled all the orders saying, “they were too large and needed to be investigated,” despite GO having been a loyal customer for more than a decade! Staples had read about the fire and sent them an “unbelievable gift box full of supplies to get us back up and running!” Obviously, Staples got all those previously-cancelled orders as well. Again, tapping into the power of social media, @GOSEED posted tweets telling the story with the last one showing a photo of the gift box and stating, “THANK YOU STAPLES! Your generosity is so much appreciated!! (red heart emoji) #StaplesCustomerForLife #LifeAfterTheFire.”

In retrospect, Hall says, “It probably would have been a lot cheaper if the whole building would have burned to the ground. The smoke and water damage were extensive, with the debris filling five big dumpsters. Some of the exterior walls were salvageable, but they had to pull all of the drywall nails from the studs. Once we go back in to rebuild, all the surfaces, even those that were not touched by the fire but were exposed to the smoke, will need to be coated with shellac and sealed.”



Duane Klundt shows the post-clean-up view of inside the office, now down to the bare-bones.

Hall calls himself a “type A and a bit of a control freak,” but knows you can’t make other people move at your speed. It’s already taken nearly 6 months working with the architect and the structural engineer to get the plan redone to prepare for the rebuilding. The good thing is he’s viewing the rebuilding as an opportunity.

Hall says, “The building was a converted house that allowed us to develop a relaxing office environment, which we will maintain, but we’ll improve the functionality and flow. We had been reluctant to add on knowing the county regulations would require that we become ADA compliant. Now we will increase the office space and become ADA compliant at the same time. We’re adding a formal break room and a new conference room. We’ll create a separate room with a fireproof door; keep our computer server in that room and increase our server capacity. We’re reorganizing the private offices and relocating marketing into one central office. We’re all excited about turning the plans to reality.



This post-fire view of the GO fire damage, taken from Duane Klundt’s office, shows little was salvageable.

“Right now, optimistically, with luck, we’ll be in the new office at this time next year. If we weren’t expanding the office, it would go a lot faster, but we’ll be pouring a new foundation and that will slow it down because of the subcontractors that will be needed to do it all. Approval of the plans and working through the processes with various county entities can be tedious at best, so we’re geared up for it. We’ll be very proactive, letting the architectural firm and the attorney deal with the processes. We’re pushing because time is money. We’re paying on the mortgage at the old property and paying rent on the space we’re currently using.”

They did lose a little business. Hall says, “A few people said they didn’t want to contact us because they knew we’d have our hands full. And while we did, we really needed all the orders we could get to cover the additional expenditures related to the fire.”

Lessons Learned

While the GO team has handled the situation well, in retrospect there are things they could have done differently and are now implementing. Their major points are listed below.

Sometimes the cleaning company leaves your place a mess, choose wisely. The reconstructed offices will definitely not have carpets.

Data must be backed up in two locations. Two physical sites some distance apart may be okay as most IT companies will have the offsite server protected from fire or water or whatever. But a major flood or hurricane or tornado can cover a broad area. We were fortunate to have arranged for cloud backup prior to the fire.

We had renewed our replacement insurance policy between November and August, adding about 20 percent to cover higher replacement costs. We should have invested in more insurance, adding closer to 50 percent, to allow for the building expansion, ADA compliance, the increased cost of building materials, and the cleanup and remediation.

We didn’t have updated documentation of our assets. We’ll now photo and/or videotape ALL of the important things we have. If we think it’s so necessary that we’ve kept it for however long, we’ll document it.

We also relied too much on the third party hired by the insurance company to do the cleanup and documentation. Should we ever need such service again, we will set up our own system and have everything on videotape.

We did not have business interruption insurance, but our downtime was so short we would not have utilized it. We’ll continue to quantify the need for that coverage on the cost-to-benefits ratio.

The biggest investment is in the equipment and we had some redundancy there. That’s a waste of capital, especially in the electronics.

It would have been beneficial to have more scanned documents rather than having paper documentation. Moving forward, we’ll set up electronic scanners on each employee’s desk. If we have the electronic file, with the digital backup onsite and cloud backup, we don’t need the paper copy.

We had too much unnecessary stuff. If it’s not needed, we’ll throw it away.

Catching up takes longer than anticipated. We’re planning ahead and will continue to hire professional expertise where it’s beneficial to do so, so we can concentrate our efforts on running our business.

The 90/10 Rule

GO is a strong proponent of the 90/10 rule. 10 percent is what happens to you. 90 percent is what you do with it. Challenge or opportunity! It’s all in your perspective.



Strong proponents of the 90/10 rule, GO posted this photo of Risa Demasi and the cat, with the caption, “The Future’s Bright...”

“We choose to view the fire as an opportunity,” says Hall. “We’re not going to come out of it whole. We’ll survive it, and we’ll also be able to use it to improve, but at a huge cost. Still, we’re excited about what we can accomplish in the reconstruction. The new office will be much more functional, flow much better, and allow us to hire more people and grow the business.”

Kludt adds, “The outpouring of concern and offers of assistance from our business partners and customers, other TPI members, the Oregon green industry, even some competitors, was exceptional and greatly appreciated. That support is something we’ll always remember and treasure.”

Suz Trusty is co-editor of *Turf News*.

All photos courtesy of Grassland Oregon.



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TPI MARKET RESEARCH EXPLORES WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP IT REAL!

By Casey Reynolds, PhD

As any business person knows, being able to position your product in the market is a vital component of success. Not only is it important to have a good product, but how do you tell the story about your product in a way that is attractive to potential customers? We are always quick to tell our story about what we want people to hear about turfgrass, but what is it that they want to hear? More importantly, what is it that causes decision-makers to see our product favorably? The TPI Board of Trustees tasked our staff with this objective in late 2017 and after extensive research that concluded in late 2018, we will be incorporating the results into new TPI resources in 2019.

TPI staff created a call for proposals in early 2018 and distributed it to several well-known international public relations (PR) firms for review. Six companies submitted proposals to TPI which were reviewed and voted upon by the Board of Trustees at the 2018 International Education Conference & Field Day in Tucson, AZ. FleishmanHillard, a global PR firm and digital marketing agency based in St. Louis, MO, was selected as the winning proposal. Founded in 1946, FleishmanHillard is an internationally recognized PR firm that represents businesses including Barnes & Noble, Proctor & Gamble, General Motors, Energizer, EA Sports, and more. They have over 80 offices in 30 countries which means they can reach any audience, anytime, anywhere. This was certainly one of the contributing factors for TPI selecting FleishmanHillard, because it is important that whatever resources we create, we do it in a way that also serves our international members.



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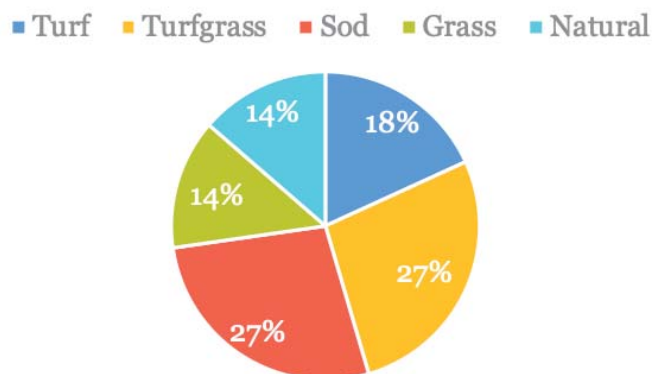
This work began in earnest as soon as the selection was made and included several different components. First, FleishmanHillard analyzed the current state of affairs in print and social media with regard to natural grass and artificial turf. TPI and its artificial turf competitors tout many of the same benefits including cost, environmental impact, durability and safety—many of consumers' major concerns.



FleishmanHillard also analyzed the share of each group's voice in digital media, as well as the positive, neutral, and negative perceptions by subject for natural grass and artificial turf. This analysis resulted in a clearer vision of the opportunities that TPI has to address consumer concerns when promoting natural grass. One of the key items that jumped out was that it appears natural grass fields are taken for granted. There are fewer arguments for natural grass, rather than against artificial turf, because natural grass is in the default position. Artificial turf often gets more coverage and has non-neutral articles simply because it is new and debated. TPI certainly has the opportunity to create a unified voice in promoting natural grass and can use this research to build upon its messaging. In addition to looking outward, this research also looked inward to TPI members. FleishmanHillard interviewed TPI members to determine what it is that they see as hurdles in communicating the value of natural grass. These members included producers, field builders, sales staff, and licensors of natural grass. One of the key findings that came out of these discussions was that artificial turf is not the only enemy. TPI members believe that another tall hurdle is a general lack of education and understanding of natural grass and its benefits.

Another key finding that came out of this research is that TPI members call their product many different things (See Figure 2). While this seems trivial, we later found that it does in fact lead to confusion in the marketplace.

Figure 2.



What many customers see as grass or turfgrass, they may not see, or make the connection to, as sod. For instance, when surveying 141 decision-makers (coaches, athletic directors, city employees, etc.) they ranked natural grass as their first choice for replacing community greenspaces while simultaneously ranking sod as their last choice. Aren't they one and the same? Where is that disconnect coming from? This was just one of the many outcomes of

this research that TPI will be using to create our message moving forward.

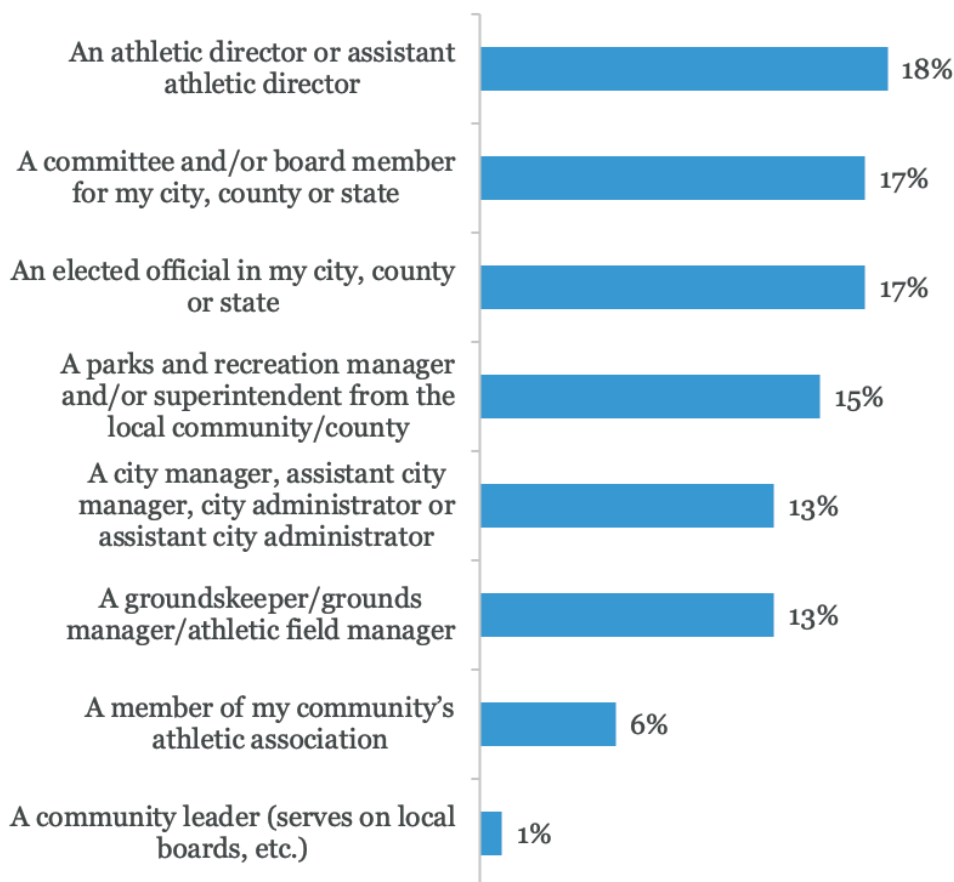
The analysis of this research leads us directly into the next phase of this work which revolved around messaging. FleishmanHillard and TPI staff worked together to create a unified message which could be tested on key audiences for clarity, quality, and impact. This message was tested on 141 decision makers who serve in positions which allow them to choose playing surfaces. They included athletic directors, school board members, elected officials, parks and recreation managers, community leaders, and more. A survey was conducted in late 2018 to determine the current understanding of natural grass and artificial turf as well as what caused the respondents to choose natural grass.

The results of this research were presented at the 2019 International Education Conference in Charlotte, NC, and will also be part of the morning session at the 2019 TPI Summer Convention & Field Day in Minneapolis, MN, on July 23-25.

Most importantly however, TPI will use the results of this messaging research as a foundation moving forward in developing new resources for TPI members

Figure 1.

Decision-Makers' Positions (n=141)



"It was important for us to select a firm with international reach so that our message is meaningful and impactful in promoting natural grass for our members all around the world."

to promote natural grass. One of the first items just released, is the creation of a social media campaign built around #KeepItREAL which encourages everyone to Keep it REAL by choosing natural grass. The official #KeepItREAL logo is available for download by TPI members in the Member-Only Toolkit at www.TurfGrassSod.org and we are encouraging members to adopt this in their area and on their social media platforms. Be sure to tag TPI and/or use #KeepItREAL so we can help spread the message online.

TPI members also will be seeing new resources to be released in the coming months, such as a new TPI website built around the results of this market research, as well as new information on the superior safety and health of natural grass as compared to artificial turf.

This was one of the items that TPI members voiced in our member research. They stated strongly that TPI needs to be the leading voice in promoting natural grass over artificial turf by providing publicly accessible information to share with decision makers. The first of these resources is complete and will be available online prior to the 2019 Summer Convention & Field Day.

The market research that TPI and FleishmanHillard has been conducting over the last two years has provided the necessary information for TPI staff to create new content as well as revise old content in a way that is strategic and impactful. Over the coming months, TPI members will see this content released and we encourage you to use it to spread the message of the positive benefits of natural grass. Our members have made their voice heard, our Board of Trustees have provided the directive and resources, and our staff are working diligently on providing the results. We look forward to continuing our relationship with FleishmanHillard and the value that a professional PR firm such as this can bring to TPI.

We encourage everyone to #KeepItREAL in 2019 and beyond!



Casey Reynolds, PhD, is executive director of Turfgrass Producers International.

Photos by Steve Trusty



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- The top LSD group for drought tolerance as measured by percent green cover for each of two years in at least two locations.
- Acceptable or better turf quality for each of the two years in at least two locations.
- Have been entered into an NTEP trial for the species. For new cultivars that have met the approval standards for performance in A-LIST trials, final approval will be withheld until the cultivar(s) have been entered into an NTEP trial.

SUSTAINABLE VARIETY



REDUCED INPUTS



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FOR APPROVED VARIETIES VISIT WWW.A-LISTTURF.ORG

Members



TPI 2019

ACCELERATING THE FUTURE

TPI's 2019 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE RECAP

The reviews are in. TPI's 2019 International Education Conference, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, February 18-20, drew overwhelmingly positive comments. Stimulating! Inspiring! Excellent Education! So worthwhile! Roaring into Charlotte to take part in this event were more than 450 TPI members and guests representing 9 countries and 36 U.S. states.

Folks from turfgrass farms across the globe engaged with exhibitors, networked, connected with long-time friends—and made new ones—while attending two days of outstanding education programs; checking out the Exhibit Hall; taking in a great, multi-stop, optional tour; and enjoying the many social functions. It was an exciting time of joining together to experience everything promised and more!

This special section of *TurfNews*, compiled by Steve and Suz Trusty, captures many highlights of the Conference. Share it with all your team via the online version. To view even more conference photos, just go to SmugMug at www.tpiphotos.smugmug.com/.

Conference photos by Steve and Suz Trusty.

TPI Annual Business Meeting

Reports presented during the TPI Annual Business Meeting showed both TPI and TLI remained strong in 2018 and that is continuing in 2019. TPI Executive Director Casey Reynolds, PhD, and Associate Executive Director Karen Cooper are working in conjunction with the TPI Board of Trustees to even more effectively serve the association's membership, including bringing wider attention to turfgrass sod producers and the importance of natural grass through the Keep It REAL public relations campaign. Dr. Reynolds also spoke about TPI's current and future endeavors in attending and speaking at turfgrass events throughout the world, TPI's involvement in regulatory affairs, developing new benefits for TPI members, the new supplier categories, and the new TPI website to launch in 2019. Because of Bylaws amendments passed by the vote of the membership, as of January 1, 2019, the TPI Membership Year now coincides with the calendar year, fiscal year, *TurfNews* editorial calendar, and TPI employee policies. The 2019 TPI officers and Board of Trustee members began their year of service on that date. The slate of officers and trustees for 2020 was presented and elected unanimously. Stepping up as 2020 Secretary/Treasurer is Jim Keeven; joining the 2020 Board as Trustees are Cliff Stewart and Daniel Huggett.



The TPI 2019 Officers and Board of Trustees members are pictured here: (from left to right): John Keleher, Mark Tribbett, President Eric Heuver, Jim Keeven, Past President Jimmy Fox, Keith Wittig, Tim Wollesen, Vice President Hank Kerfoot, Aaron McWhorter, Secretary/Treasurer Steve Griffen, and Bob McCurdy.

Excellent Charlotte Education Sessions Available Now on TEC

The 2019 Education Conference presented many options to address key business challenges—which earned top ratings from attendees. On Tuesday, Keynote Speaker Shawn Rhodes, a former U.S. military war correspondent and now owner of Shoshin Consulting, opened the conference sessions with his talk, “Creating A Pivot Point: Leveraging Change Without Sacrificing Results.” Mr. Rhodes has provided a recap of this session, and the breakout session he also conducted, in the article beginning on page 38. In addition, he offers access to follow-up information to all those requesting it to help TPI members proactively adapt to change and to get their staff working together as a team. As Rhodes says, “For businesses to succeed, it’s not just about individual success; it’s about crossing the finish line as a team.”

TPI Executive Director Casey Reynolds, PhD, in the session, “Natural Turfgrass Consumer Research and Upcoming Public Relations Initiative,” shared the results from TPI’s consumer research including what reasons people cite for choosing natural grass. He also introduced TPI’s new tools that will help you to promote, market and brand natural grass locally. See the article on page 20 for more details on the Keep It REAL campaign. In a second session, “Government Relations and Regulatory Updates,” Dr. Reynolds provided details on his work on behalf of TPI members with legislators and federal agencies concerning a variety of issues, including new regulations in transportation impacting TPI members, the finalization of regulations on MSMA for use in sod production, general building regulations involving turfgrass use, and other relevant issues.

Nearly all the conference education sessions were captured by videographers onsite and are now posted on the Turfgrass Education Center (TEC), TPI’s online learning platform. You can access the sessions on your desktop computer, tablet or smartphone, anytime, anywhere by visiting TPI’s website, TurfGrassSod.org.

Wednesday morning keynote speaker Philip Davis of Tungsten Branding presented, “The Grass Is Always Greener... Until It Isn’t: The Changing Perceptions of Public Opinion.” Mr. Davis highlighted how industries, such as the dairy, pork and egg industries, have faced perception challenges and how they have successfully rebranded themselves by highlighting their strengths and repositioning their brands’ public perception, connecting that information to TPI’s Keep It REAL public relations campaign.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday gave attendees the opportunity to select topics best suited to their needs. Along with the two sessions conducted by Dr. Reynolds, options included: “Business Office Best Practices” (panel discussion); “Innovative Farm Management;” “Plant and Soil Interactions for Turfgrass Producers;” “Principles and Practices for Extending Sod Shelf-Life**;” “Turfgrass May Not be as Thirsty as Your Neighbors Think**;” “What Drives the Market: Pricing, Marketing, and Forecasting;” and “What I Wish I’d Known” (panel discussion).

Conference education sessions concluded with three Show & Tell presentations as the trustees joining the Board in 2019 introduced themselves and provided an overview of their businesses. The incoming trustees are: John Keleher of Australian Lawn Concepts, Bob McCurdy of McCurdy Sod Farms, and Aaron McWhorter of NG Turf.

** Indicates TLI-funded research



TPI Executive Director Dr. Casey Reynolds points to an audience member with a question.



Diane and Greg Mischel of DeBucks Sod Farm, Inc. during their presentation on “Innovative Farm Management.”

SPECIAL EVENTS

PROVIDE MORE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Over 150 people took part in the Monday's optional Multi-Stop Tour, enjoying some great networking opportunities while visiting some of the major sports sites of Charlotte.



Attendees learned about the myriad events held at the Speedway over the course of the year beyond the major NASCAR events, ranging from stock car races to drag races to STEM classes for middle school students. The Charlotte Motor Speedway Winners Circle provided the perfect photo opportunity with all the Tour participants gathering for a group shot there.



A highlight of the day was when attendees rode in vans around the track of Charlotte Motor Speedway at speeds exceeding 80 miles per hour. As well as feeling the thrill of rounding the 24-degree banking on the curves, participants could view just how steep that really was by watching the angle of the vans in front of them.



The Hendricks Motorsports stop gave attendees the opportunity to tour two shop buildings as well as the Hendricks Motorsports museum and team store, where some of the group are shown above, taking in some of the many years of history showcased in the museum.



Staff members were on hand to answer questions in the shop buildings, including how testing is conducted to ensure cars meet strict track standards. One area that really impressed attendees was the large, well-lit, climate-controlled testing facility. As some remarked, "What a dream that shop would be!"



After a great lunch at Sonny's Bar-B-Q, tour attendees split into two groups, with each alternating stops so all could visit both Bank of America Stadium, home of the NFL's Carolina Panthers, and BB&T Ballpark, home of Minor League Baseball's Triple A Charlotte Knights. Here the group gathers on the Carolina Panthers' field as Head Groundskeeper Tom Vaughn shares field construction specifics as well as his field maintenance program.



Charlotte Knights Head Groundskeeper Matt Parrott, the 2018 Triple A Sports Turf Manager of the Year, shares field construction specifics along with his field maintenance program as the group gathers on the field.

Two great receptions provided a high-energy kickoff to the Conference.



On Monday evening, TPI President Eric Heuver of Eagle Lake Professional Landscape Supply, first hosted a special First Timers Reception, with Board of Trustees members, TPI Past Presidents and several other long-time members invited to meet and greet the newcomers. Here, first timers are asked to raise their hands.



The President's Reception turnout was fantastic; so much so that as the evening progressed the crowd filled the ballroom and spilled into the adjoining lobby, setting an exciting tone for the other Conference events to come.



TPI President Eric Heuver then welcomed all attendees to join the party for the President's Reception—and they did! Networking had the ballroom humming with conversation.

All Conference participants were invited to join in the Wednesday morning Inspirational Breakfast.



The Inspirational Breakfast music was provided by the Worship Team from Fruitland Baptist Church of Hendersonville, NC. Singing are Rebekah Barker (wife of Aaron who has worked at Turf Mountain Sod for over 20 years) and Rancee Stepp, playing piano is Lorri Rhodes, and playing bass is Dave Mains (husband of Candi, the younger sister of Wayne Pittillo and Linda Bradley)



TPI Past President Bob Weerts was the Inspirational Breakfast speaker. He shared his intensely moving story of faith and loss and how TPI members form a family for all of us. The message encouraged all in attendance to reflect upon their own blessings, with a reminder from Bob to not take anyone for granted and to let people in your life know how much you love and appreciate them.

EXHIBIT HALL SHOWCASES SUPPLIERS

A tremendous crowd streamed to the Exhibit Hall on Tuesday evening and again on Wednesday afternoon eager to visit with the 59 exhibitors and event sponsors lining the hall. On display was an array of the latest and greatest products for turfgrass sod production. The exhibitors were ready and willing to answer questions and interact with the sod producer representatives and they had excellent opportunities to do so as individuals and small groups gathered at their displays. Connections were made; products were sold.

Tuesday evening's dinner and Wednesday's lunch were served in the Exhibit Hall. In addition, there were drawings for special prizes, including the Passport for Prizes drawings. TPI is fortunate to have so many supportive vendors and sponsors to make our events possible!





2019 EXHIBITORS

Advanced Equipment Sales

Alliance Tire Group

A-LIST
(Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf)

Amp Agronomy

Aqua Aid Solutions

Aqua-Yield

BigYellowBag/OrderSodNow

BrettYoung

Brouwer Kesmac

Columbia Seeds

DLF Pickseed & Seed Research of Oregon

Donkey Forklift

E-Cargo Tarps

FireFly Automatix, Inc.

First Products, Inc.

Geoponics Corporation

Grassland Oregon (GO)

H & H Farm Machine Co., Inc.

Hiab USA/ Princeton Delivery Systems

HydroStraw, LLC - Summit Seed, Inc.

Jacklin Seed

Jonathan Green & Sons, Inc.

KWMI

Landmark Turf & Native Seed

Locus Agricultural Solutions

Magnum

Master Craft Industrial Equipment Corp.

Mountain View Seeds

Northstar Equipment Corp.

Northwest Tillers, Inc.

Pennington Seed, Inc.

Plant Food Company, Inc.

Pomp's Tire Service, Inc.

Poyntz Inc.

Professional Turf Equipment

Progressive Turf Equipment Inc.

Pure Seed

Redox

RTF Turf Producers Association

SiteOne Landscape Supply, LLC

Sod Production Services

Sod Solutions

Southern Specialty Equipment, Inc.

STEC Equipment, Inc.

TAMANET (USA)

Texas Sod Leasing

The Turfgrass Group, Inc.

Trebro Manufacturing, Inc.

Trimax Mowing Systems

Turf Logistics

Turf Merchants, Inc. (TMI)

TWCA
(Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance)

Valley Irrigation/Ag Sense

Vereens Turf

Vista Seed Partners LLC

THE LAWN INSTITUTE BANQUET AND FUNDRAISING AUCTION AT NASCAR HALL OF FAME A ROARING SUCCESS!!

More than 300 conference attendees raced to the NASCAR Hall of Fame to support TLI! Thanks to the generosity of all those participating, a total of \$123,682 was raised!!

After a time to mingle and network at bit, the group made their dinner selections from the wide assortment of food offerings at the sumptuous buffet.



Tables begin filling as attendees make their dinner selections. The action kicked off with the much-anticipated raffle drawing for the 1975 Corvette Convertible donated by Brian Bouchard of Kingston Turf. Richard Vaccaro of Clarksville Sod Farms, Inc. in New Jersey was the lucky winner! Congratulations to Richard and thanks to everyone who bought tickets in support of TLI. Special thanks to Brian for his generous donation!



Raffle-winner Richard Vaccaro (left) smiles as Brian Bouchard hands him the keys to the 1975 Corvette.

TLI Fundraising concluded with the auctioning of a custom-designed, Richard Petty-inspired Magnum A-Series Installer, along with two hats, a manual and the initial concept drawing—ALL signed by the NASCAR Legend himself, Richard Petty! All courtesy of Magnum. The installer has found a happy home with TPI member Chad Price of Carolina Green.

Following the auction, attendees were able to enjoy all the exhibits and hands-on activities in the Hall of Fame!



Chad Price tweeted, "It's not how fast you go, but how well you go fast," or something like that. Carolina Green should be in good shape this year with our new Magnum special one of a kind Richard Petty installer. Got the hat to go with it! The tweet also included his Thank You to Magnum, TPI and all involved, including the staff at Carolina Green! Photo courtesy of Chad and Kerry Price



AUCTION ITEMS, THEIR GENEROUS DONORS AND THE HIGH BIDDERS

Item	Donor	High Bidder
NASCAR Fun Pack	The Lawn Institute	Linda Moyer
Bedtime Basket, with Handmade Quilt	Karen Cooper, TPI Associate Executive Director	Bob Weerts
Disney Basket	Keith Wittig of Central Turf Farms, Inc.	Will Nugent
Handmade Duck Call	Jamie Spears of Inman Mills Farm	Jim Keeven
TPI 2020 International Education Conference & Field Day Registration & Hotel Package plus Dinner	TPI	Daniel Huggett
R&R Parts Package	Tom Rogers on behalf of R&R Products	Tom Halter
Steak and Wine Package	Bonnie Wendling on behalf Hilltop Herefords (steaks); Drs. Doug Karcher, Mike Richardson, and John Sorochan (wine)	Will Nugent
Weekend of Relaxing at Texas Lodge	Chance Stone of Texas Sod Leasing	Jim Keeven
Handmade Duck Call	Jamie Spears of Inman Mills Farm	Mark Tribbett
Green Egg Grilling Package	Jason Nugent on behalf of Harmony Outdoor Brands	Steve Griffen
Lodging and Paragliding Trip in Australia	John Keleher of Australian Lawn Concepts	Linda Bradley
Brouwer Turf Roller Model BTR30	Gerry Brouwer on behalf of Brouwer Kesmac	Claus Zander
Remington Model 870 Shotgun	The Lawn Institute	Randy Jasperson
American Red Snapper Fishing Trip in Gulf of Mexico	Will Nugent of Bethel Farms	Randy Jasperson
Dinner for 8 with Your Own Private Chef	Hank and Mary Kerfoot of Modern Turf	Will Nugent
Season-Long Agricultural Treatment for 100 acres	David Bradley on behalf of Locus Agricultural Solutions	Keith Wittig
Four Day Seed Production Visit	Ed Lee on behalf of Hydro Straw – Summit Seed	Steve Griffen
Magnum Limited-Edition Richard Petty Inspired A-Series Sod Installer	Steven Dover on behalf of Magnum	Chad Price





THANK YOU SPONSORS!

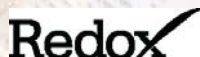
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WEED CONTROL LESSONS LEARNED IN 2018

By Jim Brosnan, PhD, Greg Breeden, and José J. Vargas

*Editor's note: This article was originally published in **Tennessee Turfgrass** and has been slightly modified for publication in **Turf News**.*

Each year the turfgrass weed science program at the University of Tennessee conducts hundreds of research trials in the field, greenhouse, and laboratory. Despite having an array of different objectives, ***all of these trials have a singular focus: to help turfgrass managers with weed management issues.*** The article below outlines key lessons learned in our program last year that will hopefully be of use to turfgrass managers in the coming season.

Lesson #1 – Explore Weather Data

Mother Nature certainly threw sod producers across the southern United States many curveballs in 2018. The year began with air temperatures measuring much higher than historical averages leading to spring emergence of warm-season turfgrasses (and weeds) occurring earlier than normal. Air temperatures fell in April, measuring nearly 10 degrees cooler (on average) than April 2017. Warming in 2018 (as measured by growing degree day accumulation) was higher than the previous two seasons and this period of warming continued into the fall. Sod producers are encouraged to identify local weather resources in their area for more information about factors potentially affecting production of warm- and cool-season turfgrasses. A detailed breakdown of erratic weather across Tennessee in 2018 is available at: <https://medium.com/@UTTurfWeeds/several-curveballs-from-mother-nature-in-2018-d487c9b2015d>.

Irregular weather patterns will not only affect the severity of weed infestations in warm- and cool-season turfgrasses

but the efficacy of several herbicide treatments as well. That said, local university Extension offices can help. Should sod producers encounter oddities during the 2019 season, they are highly encouraged to contact their local Extension office for a breakdown of climatic conditions that may help explain the situation.

Lesson #2 – Know Your Poa

One of the biggest lessons learned last year is that *Poa annua* populations across the state of Tennessee are very different from one another; and this will likely be true in other regions as well. Thanks to support from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and Tennessee GCSA, our team is currently conducting a survey of *Poa annua* across the state. Efforts have allowed us to study 72 different populations randomly selected from golf courses during spring 2018 in East, Middle and West Tennessee that had either bermudagrass (*Cynodon* spp.) or zoysiagrass (*Zoysia* spp.) as a primary turfgrass species. Things we've learned studying these populations include:

- *Poa annua* from West Tennessee takes longer to germinate from seed than that found in Middle or East Tennessee. Moreover, populations from West Tennessee grow less vigorously from seed as well.
- Over 64 percent of the *Poa annua* collected in this survey has some level of resistance to glyphosate (e.g., Roundup)
- Over 58 percent of the *Poa annua* collected in this survey has some level of resistance to prodiamine (e.g., Barricade)



Herbicide resistant annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) infesting a dormant zoysiagrass (*Zoysia* spp.) turf.

“Irregular weather patterns will not only affect the severity of weed infestations in warm- and cool-season turfgrasses but the efficacy of several herbicide treatments as well.”

While we are still continuing to study these populations, implications of this research to turfgrass managers everywhere are significant, particularly in regard to herbicide selection. The current recommendation from University of Tennessee Extension is to target *Poa annua* infestations of warm-season turfgrass with a mixture of pre- and postemergence herbicides in October. This approach is an optimal resistance management strategy in that it facilitates using multiple modes of action for control. Additionally, delaying treatment until October increases the likelihood of turf remaining devoid of *Poa annua* throughout spring, compared to making a single application of a preemergence herbicide in late August or early September. Keep in mind that these timings may vary amongst producers in other geographies; however, the benefits of using pre- and postemergence herbicide mixtures for resistance management is applicable everywhere. *Poa annua* management is critically important in sod production considering that material can be distributed over a wide geographical area; those not already implementing a resistance management program should do so as soon as possible in 2019.

“Weed control programs can incorporate different herbicide applications along with timely cultural practices to deliver an integrated approach to weed control.”

Lesson #3 - Soil Moisture Affects Goosegrass Control

Postemergence goosegrass (*Eleusine indica*) control is a challenge every season. In 2018, we learned that the growing environment in which goosegrass is commonly found could be a reason why herbicide applications often struggle. We evaluated several different herbicides for postemergence goosegrass control in the greenhouse including: Speedzone, Acclaim Extra, Tribute Total, Pylex, and Revolver. These treatments were applied to multi-tiller goosegrass maintained in soils varying in volumetric moisture content (VMC) from <12 percent to >20 percent. When applied at maximum labeled rates to plants growing in soils measuring <12 percent VMC, none of the herbicides tested controlled goosegrass greater than 25 percent.

When soil moisture increased, goosegrass control increased dramatically as well. For example, Tribute Total only controlled goosegrass 20 percent when applied to plants growing in soil measuring <12 percent VMC compared to 93 percent when applied to plants growing in soil measuring >20 percent VMC.

To that end, we are recommending that sod producers measure soil moisture content before making postemergence herbicide applications for goosegrass control in 2019. Use of a moisture meter can aid in determining if adequate soil moisture is present prior to treatment. It is important to remember that goosegrass needs time to acclimate to changes in soil moisture; simply applying irrigation prior to herbicide treatment likely will not improve efficacy.

Goosegrass Control 36 DAT with Tribute Total (3.2 oz/A)



< 12% VMC



> 20% VMC

Lesson learned #3: Interesting results in our ongoing research looking at soil moisture effects on herbicides for goosegrass control. Checking soil moisture before treatment in 2019 might not be a bad idea.

Lesson #4 - Perennial Weeds of High Soil Moisture Continue to be an Issue

Another takeaway from last year was that perennial weeds that prefer moist soils continue to be problematic. Weeds such as Kyllinga (*Kyllinga* spp.), yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*), purple nutsedge (*Cyperus rotundus*), Virginia buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*), and doveweed (*Murdannia nudiflora*) continue to infest warm- and cool-season turfgrasses across Tennessee and beyond. As a result, many of the newest herbicides entering the turfgrass marketplace have been developed with these weeds in mind including (but not limited to) Aethon, Celero, Dismiss NXT, GameOn, Relzar, SwitchBlade, and SurePower. Regardless of product, controlling these perennial weeds will likely require sequential applications in addition to improving the growing environment to favor turfgrass growth in lieu of weeds.



Yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) infesting a tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) turf.

Lesson #5 - Programmatic Thinking Works

For the past several years our team has encouraged turfgrass managers to implement weed control programs at their facilities, similar to what is done when managing turfgrass diseases. What is a weed control program? It is simply a well thought out strategy to maintain turfgrass as weed-free as possible from January through December. Weed control programs can incorporate different herbicide applications along with timely cultural practices to deliver an integrated approach to weed control. This proactive strategy is very different from the reactionary approach many take to controlling turfgrass weeds—i.e. seeing an infestation and spraying the most readily available herbicide.

The 2018 season served as yet another reminder that weed control programs work very well and that there are many different ways to customize a program for a given sod farm. The proactive process of developing a weed control program offers key advantages including:

- Weeds are exposed to different herbicidal modes of action, either in rotation or mixtures with one another; doing so will therefore reduce selection pressure for resistant biotypes.
- Programs allow sod producers to always improve their effectiveness in controlling weeds. The best turfgrass managers in our industry take notes throughout the season about weed management strategies that were (or were not) effective and can build programs based on this information. This process is very different than simply approaching the problem “the way it’s always been done” or making choices about weed management based on what herbicide is the most discounted in an early order program.
- Programs can be tailored to a specific field or subset of fields at a given farm. For example, different programs can be implemented on different fields to account for variations in growing environment—which makes a great deal of sense considering that no two fields are the same.

For more information on turfgrass weed control, please visit the University turfgrass weed science website that serves your state, county, country and/or geographic region. The University of Tennessee’s turfgrass weed science website is tnturfgrassweeds.org but there probably will be other resources available to you locally. Additionally, practitioners are encouraged to visit mobileweedmanual.com, a tool developed by University of Tennessee Extension professionals to assist green industry professionals in selecting herbicides for use in turf and ornamentals.

Jim Brosnan, PhD, is associate professor in the Plant Sciences Department of the University of Tennessee (UT) – Knoxville and director of the UT Weed Diagnostics Center. Greg Breeden, MS, is a weed science extension assistant responsible for managing all turfgrass weed science field trials at UT. José J. Vargas, MS, is a research associate responsible for managing all turfgrass weed science greenhouse and laboratory research projects at UT, particularly those focused on herbicide resistance mechanisms in weeds. Jose currently serves as the head diagnostician at the UT Weed Diagnostics Center.

All photos by Dr. Jim Brosnan.



Raising the Standards on Sod Farms all across America!



Bag photo taken at
SelecTurf Sod Farm, Jefferson City, MO



Bag photo taken at
Jirik Sod Farm, Farmington, MN



Bag photo taken at
Saratoga Sod Farm, Stillwater, NY

Jonathan Green supplies grass seed to hundreds of sod farms and thousands of hardware stores and garden centers from Maine to California. Retail seed mixtures such as Black Beauty Ultra are directly associated with sod growers.

Jonathan Green has substantially upgraded our retail bags and this has dramatically increased our sales. Now we're doing the same for our Black Beauty and Blue Panther Sod Bags. The best grass seed in America now comes in the best bags in America!



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PIVOT POINT— TURN ON A DIME WITHOUT SACRIFICING RESULTS

By Shawn Rhodes



The dynamic presentation by TPI International Education Conference Keynote Speaker Shawn Rhodes provided tools to create a Pivot Point to leverage change to improve the results we get.

In your life and in your business, the best plans never work out as planned. The biggest need I hear from the companies I work with—and this is backed up by conversations I had with TPI leaders—is a need for a way to proactively adapt—to pivot, if you will—whenever unexpected change occurs, wherever it occurs in an organization. This article is about creating a Pivot Point in your business. If you or your people are struggling with keeping up in a rapidly-changing environment, if you're tired of not meeting your business objectives or sliding in just under the wire, then you're ready to create a Pivot Point.

Pivot Point is defined as a place where change not only should happen but must occur in order for a plan to be successful. Additionally, it's the center point of a rotational system. As I shared during my keynote at TPI's annual conference in Charlotte, NC, a Pivot Point is not only the place and time where leaders, managers and employees

shift in their way of getting things done; it's also the turning point that allows change to happen quickly.

Change is continual. We can't stop it. But we can leverage it to improve the results we get. Rather than follow change as it happens, we can get ahead of the rate of change and develop strategies to handle it. Without an unlimited budget, we simply need to work more effectively with the resources we have.

If we heard these six words from a trusted medical person, "You have 15 minutes to live," what change would that bring to our lives? At 18, I became a war correspondent in the U.S. Marines, working with the highest performing forces, traveling around the world to find the folks that were being successful in life-or-death situations. The teams that had an awesome success rate with bringing their people back safely had a mission: to cross the finish line as a team.

Business challenges are not life-or-death issues, but they do impact the life of a company. We're alive and growing, and in the Turfgrass Industry we love watching things grow. We grow farms, families and businesses. In the midst of doing that, it's easy to lose track of sharing what our goals are with everyone in the company. When we came up with our last initiative, did everyone know what success looked like? Did sales, marketing, production, logistics and office personnel know what their individual roles were to achieve that success?

For businesses to succeed, it's not just about individual success; it's about crossing the finish line as a team. Change starts in the heart and the head; if we change how we treat employees and interact with them, we can change the results our company produces.

While many small businesses have adopted SMART Goals, the highest-performing teams are leaving the 'A'—achievable—out of their plans. In today's marketplace, employees need to do more with less. Yet it takes looking at things differently to produce more than we've ever asked them to produce before. What if we asked for a 50 percent increase in production? We'd probably hear, "That's a nice idea boss; let's strive for what's achievable—five percent or so." The cost of doing business eats that up. To pivot, we need to aim higher.

What can I help you do to help us succeed?

The dirty word is training. How many employees roll their eyes if we ask them about training? To engage them, training needs to be immediately applicable. If we want to be successful, we have to provide the resources to make it happen. It's those resources that allow us to get ahead of the rate of change.

"Pivot Point is defined as a place where change not only should happen but must occur in order for a plan to be successful."



Shawn Rhodes told attendees, "If you're not sure if training is changing something, it's basically useless."

There are only two areas where we only have to be "close:" throwing horseshoes and throwing hand grenades. I was not an athletic kid and my throwing arm was not developed for an environment requiring helmets and protective vests. In Marine Corps training, earplugs firmly placed, I could barely hear the grenade range instructor's safety instructions on how to lob a grenade over a wall. My throw put the grenade on the top edge of the wall where it wobbled between dropping over or dropping back in. I'll never forget the amazed look on the instructor's face—or the relief we both felt when it dropped over the wall. If that training was like the training most companies conduct, I'd passed the minimum requirement and that's where it would have stopped. Instead, that instructor kept me on the range until I learned how to throw a grenade accurately and effectively.

If you're not sure if training is changing something, it's basically useless. The question to ask before any training session—whether it's in a classroom, in the shop, or out in the field—is, "If I deliver this training how will our customers know?" If we can do something in training that connects our employees with our end user; if it makes an impact for the people that are using our product; we're creating a Pivot Point. It comes from the solutions to the problems that we solve. It's solutions that raise the bar.

An advertisement for STEC Equipment. The main image shows a red and white S3 Trilo machine on a green lawn. The text "SPRING CLEANING" is overlaid on the image. Below the main image are four smaller images showing different attachments: a wide area brush hood, optional verticut & flail blades, a high capacity high tip dump box, and an optional wander hose for debris pick-up. The text "QUALITY INNOVATION DELIVERED" is prominently displayed at the bottom. The STEC logo is in the bottom left corner, and the S3 Trilo logo is in the bottom right corner. The text "STEC EQUIPMENT" is written vertically on the right side of the advertisement.

SPRING CLEANING

S3 TRILO

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Yet, innovative solutions are rarely born in a stressful environment. We need to have plans in place before stressful times by supplying training that provides solutions to problems that our folks may encounter. Even in business, solutions are often kept secret. We learn what we need to know to run our business after two, three or four decades working in it. If we have to hand the reins over to a general manager, son or daughter, have we communicated solutions, or kept them secret?

Ask: “What did we do that saved us that season?” “What happens if we begin having those conditions again?” Record those answers and build them into training. Don’t wait for change to enter the picture. Take an active role in making sure the next generation has solutions. That will create effective training programs. New people will receive a training manual that incorporates all that our employees have learned.

Execution Cycle

To build a business plan that is executed at a high level and keeps people accountable, we need to assess whatever changes we are likely going to encounter and build them into the plan, taking the ability to fail out of the picture. To do that, we need to plan and perform in a new way. Typically, companies operate with a two-step system: Plan and Perform. The one thing most people don’t do is Process, by asking what went right; what went wrong; how do we do it next time to make it even better? The integrated model for high performance is the three-step Execution Cycle: Plan, Perform and Process.

The number one element of a great mission (or plan) is a goal that ties into a central purpose. For us, that might be to establish our business as the top sod supplier in our market. Don’t plan in a vacuum. We want to get the different parts of the company working together: sales, marketing, office, logistics, harvesting, production, distribution. If we have an initiative that’s going to cross every department in our business, have at least one representative from each department in the room as the plan is developed.

“For businesses to succeed, it’s not just about individual success; it’s about crossing the finish line as a team.”



Shawn Rhodes worked directly with Conference attendees in a breakout session building on the information he’d shared during his keynote presentation.

Ask hard questions of the team: “Here’s our plan, how do you see it executing?” “Do you see ways to improve?” “Help me help you—what does marketing need to make this successful?” Encourage them to be part of the process; to team build. And if the team presents an idea that has been tried and failed before, respond with the facts; that’s a good idea, but ... or that’s a good idea and ... Then explain what went wrong. But do be open to solutions that, with the tools now available, could make something that was tried and failed before a workable solution today.

Objective

Each plan has an objective. State the objective in detail, giving a clear picture of success. Each objective the company establishes should have three elements: precision; profitability and purpose.

Precise

As a business owner, we have a vision of what the grand strategic map of the growing season is and what needs to take place during that period to fulfill each objective. We need to communicate that clearly. Our employees need to know when their particular pieces must be done. If something has to be completed before something else must start, make the exact time clear.

If the objective is to increase delivery by a specific number of pallets of sod during the week, don't just say they need to be delivered by the end of the week. Say they need to be at the job site by noon on Friday. If the objective has a long-term goal, such as increased profitability by the end of the year, say it has to be achieved by December 31, 2019.

Profitable

If the objective is to increase delivery by a specific number of pallets of sod during the week, determine what the profit on the increased delivery will be and state it by number or percentage. If the objective is a year-end profit margin increase of 30 percent, state that so everyone knows the target.

Purpose

How will achieving this objective impact the business? Make it very clear to your people what you want to achieve and state it clearly, such as, the purpose is to remain the preferred sod provider to our distributors.

Challenges and Resources

What are the likely challenges that leaders encounter in meeting objectives? What challenges did we run into last year that were internal to the organization (we had some control over it) or external (outside our control like regulations, environmental or economic challenges)? Get all the issues on the table and bring in your staff to share as well, so all the issues can be processed. Ask: "What can we do to lessen those challenges?" "What are all the things we have that will help?"

Consider internal issues, such as those with customers, staff, family, machinery, communications systems. What if we only have two sod harvest people and one of them leaves? Who can be trained to step in?

"The question to ask before any training session—whether it's in a classroom, in the shop, or out in the field—is, 'If I deliver this training how will our customers know?'"

What could go wrong that's out of our control? Are there new regulations or laws that impact us? What if it floods, or freezes early? What if the road is closed? Look at things that could happen that are not things we can change and develop a contingency plan to deal with them if they do occur. Have a team assigned to move equipment to a safe place if flooding is predicted. Alert drivers to contact the logistics department for alternate routing if roads are closed. Make sure all employees know that if someone gets hurt, you want a call and text to your cell phone right away. You want people to know that if this does happen, then this is what they should do.

Consider all resources as plans develop. Reach out to peers in TPI and other segments of the green industry; tap into distributor relationships; connect with the local university's turfgrass specialists; seek advice from bankers, accountants or from consultants.



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Who is Accountable?

While there will be multiple people accountable, one each for each department involved, we need to assign one person as the lead and the single point of accountability for the objective. That eliminates the need to go from person to person for every part of a project.

How Will We Know?

Do not just assume those pallets have been delivered or that customer list has been generated. The person assigned to spearhead the objective needs to be responsible for compiling and delivering the report at a precise time, such as 1:00 pm on Friday. If we're going to run a tight ship, we need that kind of specificity built into our plans. Once the task is completed, that person will send the team an email with the reports, specs, flow sheets, etc. and a text noting that the email has been sent for those in the field whose only immediate access is their cell phone. If only one person knows how to access key information and they're removed from the chain—the information doesn't exist anymore. If it's on the shared drive, or email, it's accessible whether its creator is at work that day or not. If we don't get the email that's due, it's a signal that something is wrong, and we need to follow up on it. All those flow charts and data that accompany the email report when a task is completed take the assumptions out of the picture.

After-Action

We've already gone further than 90 percent of organizations do at this point, but let's take it one step further. When the delivery date of an objective has passed, take the time with the team to go over what worked, what didn't, and what should be done differently next time. List out those items as actionable objectives and build them into the next plan.

Creating Pivot Point Solutions

Sidestepping problems actually prevents solutions. If we don't fix problems one growing season, they will come back to haunt us. What if we permanently solve those problems? How much more efficient and profitable would our company be?

Our people are solving hundreds of problems every day. Are we capturing any of those problems; are we permanently solving them, or just going day-by-day? How can we reach into our employees' heads and get those solutions out?

Start with the simple process of each staff member bringing a set number of problems to the table each week. In my company, it's five problems. We may want to start off with one or two problems as we ramp up. The goal is to gather input from all perspectives to solve each problem in the most efficient way and put a process in

"The goal is to gather input from all perspectives to solve each problem in the most efficient way and put a process in place to permanently solve every problem our folks bring to us. The goal is never to deal with the same problem twice."

place to permanently solve every problem our folks bring to us. The goal is never to deal with the same problem twice. Collect those solutions and share them with employees. That's a Pivot Point.

We don't just want to put out fires as leaders; we want to take the matches away from the kids. The goal is to remove this problem's ability to impact our business. If we eliminate one problem a week or even one problem a month on a strategic issue; we empower our people to solve many problems on their own. We have to apply this strategy on whatever scale works for us and our business.

When our employees see the ideas they bring to the table are implemented (or at least considered), we'll have every employee thinking about how they can make the business better. As we look at our objectives, review your own performance and start the weekly meeting by pointing out what you could have done better and how you will do it better the next week. That's accountability to the team. Have each team member do the same thing, starting with the next senior staff member and working to the most junior person.

If, as a company, we can improve performance by five percent every week, we'll see that improvement compounded to reach a performance increase of more than 1,200 percent by the end of the year. It's also possible to track revenue over the same time period. I believe there will be a correlation between performance and profitability.

It takes an incredible amount of stress and pressure to run a business. Having these processes in place for our people allows us to be present for our family and our staff to be present for their families. Whenever we do turn over the company, we'll have hundreds or thousands of problems and solutions in a database ready to pass on to the next generation.



Shawn Rhodes cautioned attendees, "Sidestepping problems actually prevents solutions."

As a bonus to *Turf News* readers, Shawn Rhodes offers a **45-minute video** on how to align your teams around your objectives, the worksheets you'll need to do so, and access to his TEDx video **All FREE** by following this link:

<http://www.mbit.ly/?c4ASy>

Shawn Rhodes, a former war correspondent in the U.S. Marines, is an international expert in improving organizational performance, and his work studying organizations in more than two dozen countries has been published in news outlets around the world. His clients have included Deloitte, ConAgra, Serta-Sealy and dozens of similar businesses. He is a sought-after keynote speaker and author of the book *Pivot Point: Turn On A Dime Without Sacrificing Results*. You can contact Shawn at shawn@shoshinconsulting.com or reach him at 813-833-5059.

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MANY EVENTS, MUCH TO EXPERIENCE, IN MINNEAPOLIS!

By Karen Cooper

TPI is heading to Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the 2019 Summer Convention & Field Day, July 23-25! The week will bring sod producers and industry suppliers from around the world together for two days of industry tours, networking and learning opportunities, exhibit hall time with suppliers, and a field day hosted by TPI member Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company. (See page 48 for an introduction to this family-owned business).

The convention will kick off on Tuesday afternoon as attendees travel to the Twin City Orthopedics Performance Center, the brand new cutting-edge, natural grass practice facility for the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. The visit will be hosted by Vikings' Field Manager Grant Davisson who will talk about how grass is maintained on this high-traffic playing surface and how the facility is used in the community. *The grass in this facility is provided by TPI member Graff's Turf Farm, Inc, of Fort Morgan, Colorado.*

Tuesday afternoon will wrap up with a visit to the University of Minnesota Turfgrass Research and Outreach Center (TROE) where attendees can enjoy tours of the University's natural grass research plots, challenge their friends to some lawn games, and enjoy some Famous Dave's BBQ. University researchers from two USDA natural grass research projects will join our group for dinner and networking.

Wednesday will be a full day of learning and networking! The day will kick off with breakfast and an opportunity to hear from TPI's own Dr. Casey Reynolds as he talks about how TPI is working to promote natural grass. His presentation, *Communicating the Value of Natural Grass*, will provide an update on TPI's Public Relations initiative, recent market research on public opinions of turfgrass, and what TPI is doing to promote the industry.

After breakfast, attendees will take part in one of two options for industry tours. As of our publication deadline, attendees could choose between a visit to The Toro Company where they can hear about Toro's research priorities, learn about their history, and watch as they demonstrate some of their equipment in their outdoor testing area, with a second stop at Bailey's Nursery, a Minneapolis-based, fifth generation, family-owned company, to learn about their production of shrubs, roses, and perennials. Or attendees could choose a visit to Turfco, a family-owned company that has been making equipment for the lawn care, golf, and sports turf industry

for 50 years, with a second stop at another site, not yet named. Each tour is limited to a set number of attendees based on the capabilities of the host companies. Please check <http://www.turfgrasssod.org/pages/summer-program/> for updated information! Wednesday evening will culminate with a return to the hotel to visit with suppliers in the exhibit hall. Dinner will be served in the hall.

The Convention will conclude on Thursday, July 25, with the Field Day at Wagner Sod's first family-owned field, the hub of their sod production operations. Come enjoy this beautiful farm and see the latest pieces of turf equipment in action! The Lawn Institute Auction will be held during lunch at the Field Day.

All tours and activities will originate from TPI's host hotel, the Hyatt Regency Bloomington-Minneapolis. (See hotel details and reservation information on page 6.)

Progressive Turf Equipment is celebrating their 30th anniversary and they have invited TPI members to join their celebration by supporting The Lawn Institute!

Luke Janmaat, President, says, "Since 1989, Progressive Turf Equipment has been a proud supporter of TPI and their activities to promote the use of natural grass and the betterment of its members. Through our association, we have made many friends in the turf industry who have helped to improve our products and in turn their own operations. Our association with TPI has helped us become the company we are today!"

"In recognition of this, we are pleased to offer a brand-new TD92G for auction with the proceeds benefiting The Lawn Institute's initiatives. The Progressive TD92G tri-deck finishing mower, with a cutting swath of 22 feet and bolt-on galvanized deck shells, has long been regarded as the 'industry standard' turf mower. The TD92G comes complete with a set of blades and 'no-flat' solid deck tires. It has an MSRP of \$30,250.00 USD (MSRP does not include freight or set-up)." To learn more about the TD92G see http://www.progressiveturfequip.com/td92_ps_details.php.

Karen Cooper is associate executive director of Turfgrass Producers International.



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Gary Youmans | Green Acres Turf Farm, LLC, South Carolina

”



Not a TPI member? Contact Karen Cooper at kcooper@TurfGrassSod.org to join now!



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INTRODUCING FIELD DAY HOST WAGNER SOD, LANDSCAPING & IRRIGATION COMPANY, INC.

By Suz Trusty

Growing the business is a family tradition for Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company Inc. Located in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, the company serves the entire Minneapolis metropolitan area. They provide sod; commercial and residential lawn maintenance; a fertilization and weed control program; irrigation and sprinkler system installation and maintenance; and landscaping design and installation. In addition, as well as sod, the Inver Grove Heights retail store offers irrigation parts, black dirt, and decorative rock and mulches. Their sod farms are located in the farming communities just south of the Twin Cities area.

The company was started in 1960 by Norbert and Mary Ann Wagner. The business is now run by their three sons: Willard, who oversees the farm; and Norbert Jr. and Paul, who run the operations at Inver Grove Heights. The company tagline captures the essence of their story, “Beautify with Family Tradition.”



Company founder, Norbert Wagner, Sr., and wife and business partner Mary Ann, smile as they pose with the company's first semi.



Introducing the Wagner brothers (from left to right): Willard, Norb and Paul, co-owners of Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company Inc., Field Day hosts for the TPI 2019 Summer Convention & Field Day.

Growing Up in the Business

Willard says, “Back in 1960, Dad was buying pasture grass from local farmers who wanted to earn a little extra money and cutting it himself with a hand cutter. He did all kinds of other work, too. He did excavation, and tried rubbish hauling and trucking. But he felt that the sod gave him a better edge in life. He had grown up on a farm and liked the farming aspect.” And, the brothers agree, having a big family of eight children who could all help, was probably a factor, too.

Willard is the oldest. There are seven years between he and Norb and three years between Norb and Paul. Norb says, “There are three sisters between Willard and I and a brother, Pete, between Norb and I, and a sister younger than Paul. While we all helped on the farm when we were kids, none of our sisters were interested in staying with the family business and neither was Pete. He went into computers.”

As the oldest, Willard experienced those early days. “Dad pushed the walk-behind sod cutter and gave me a yard stick to measure with and a utility knife to cut the sod in pieces that could be rolled.”

Willard reports, “Dad and Mom bought the three-acre property in Inver Grove Heights and moved our family there when Paul was five-years old.” So, Paul adds, “We haven’t gone far from our roots; we’re still working here.” Being closer to the city was as much better for the business then as it is now.



Standard roll harvesting is taking place on the left, while big rolls are being loaded to the right, in this photo of a Wagner Sod production field.

Once they were old enough to help, Norb and Paul began working in the field, too. Norb says, “I remember sitting on the top of the walk-behind sod cutter so I could have enough down pressure for harvesting. Paul would drive a truck by standing on the seat and Dad would come and turn it around for him at the end of the row.”

As the sod business grew bigger, Mary Ann ran the office, handled the phone calls and did the office work. They bought an engine-powered Ryan sod cutter. Willard says, “It had a little chop off attachment and a little trailer that would roll up the sod, rather than having to roll it by hand. That was a big step up. It even had a seat attachment.”

Willard was enrolled in the work-study program throughout high school. Norb says, “By the time Paul and I hit high school, we didn’t need to sign up for the work-study program. They automatically scheduled our math, English and other core classes in the morning so we could work on the farm in the afternoon. That made it harder for Pete, because he wanted to do other things like play sports. The rest of us just did it.”

Norb and Paul add, “Some days we stayed home and worked during the school year because Dad needed our help. That’s just what you did growing up in the family business back then. Dad would ask if we had any friends that could work during the afternoons, on weekends, and during the summer, and we always did. Everybody helped everybody; your friends helped you and you helped your friends. The majority of those that came worked well. But those that didn’t work as hard as we all did, didn’t last long. A lot of friends and relatives that have worked with us caught that work ethic. Many of them have told us that

it has helped them as they moved on in work and in life.”

Growing the Business

Paul says, “The business really took off about 1979. Dad had been renting land and growing his own sod, so he was able to deliver a consistently good product. Then he decided to start working more directly with the end users, supplying sod for single-family homeowners and lots of town homes. The harvesting and installation at that point was all by hand.”

Norbert, Sr. bought his first farm in 1981, around 200 acres, near Northfield, MN. As the business grew, he bought additional farms close by. That first farm is the central farm now, hub of all the sod and row crop production that takes place on the 570 acres of company-owned farms, and the host site for TPI’s 2019 Field Day.

Willard says, “Dad gradually upgraded the equipment, too, and each new purchase made the work easier and more efficient. We all remember how excited Dad and Mom were when they bought their first semi. Getting the 3-point hitch tractor was a big step because we could operate lots of different equipment with it. Dad bought our first Bobcat in 1984 or 1985.”

“We implemented a landscaping and irrigation business in 1988 because we’d seen the needs of our builders,” says Norb. “The majority of our customers’ questions were around watering. We decided that if we did the irrigation and helped our customers get a watering program established, they’d have better lawns when we walked away. The landscape design and installation and the lawn care made the total package.”



This covered semi becomes a traveling billboard for the multiple operations of Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company.

Growing the Partnership

While they were still kids, but after the purchase of the first farm, Norb says, “Willard and I were working on the back of the stacking machine on one of the hottest summer days. We looked at each other and then finally said out loud what we were both thinking, ‘Do we really want to do this for a living?’ I know I hadn’t made that decision at that point.” Paul reports he went through a similar stage, asking himself, “Why do I want to do this?”

Willard says, “It was about 8th grade when I started thinking I wanted to work with my Dad.” And he never looked back. In time, Norb and Paul reached the same conclusion.

The transition to ownership began in 2005, when they started buying percentages, investing into the business. They had determined they wanted to form a partnership and run the company jointly, when their Dad was ready to retire. After that, their Dad came up with a buyout price. The buyout was completed in 2014.

Their roles within the company evolved over time. Willard says, “When you feel like you’re on someone’s heels you know you’re in the wrong spot.” Willard already had been working closely with their Dad at the farm before Norb and Paul finished high school. His role as farm manager was an easy transition. Because they are so close in age, Norb and Paul worked together, first on the sod side, and then on the irrigation, landscape design and installation, and lawn maintenance when those services were added. Paul completed the two-year program in landscape horticulture at Dakota County Technical College in Rosemount, MN. It’s a little over 10 miles from Inver Grove Heights, so he could keep working while attending. Norb now serves as estimator and oversees sod installation. Paul manages the irrigation department and the office.

Though their roles differ, “We think about ourselves as equals,” says Paul. “A lot of people say you guys think so much alike—and we do. We just keep rolling together.”

The Business Evolves

The Wagner brothers now own 570 acres of farmland, not contiguous, but within a 20-mile radius of the original Northfield farm. Willard reports between 80 to 100 acres are devoted to row crops; the remainder to sod. The fields consist of 65 percent highland soils and 35 percent lowland soils. With the differing elevation, some of the lower ground is typically wetter than the higher ground. That can be an advantage during the always changeable seasons, typically allowing for harvesting in some of the fields in all but the most extreme weather conditions, which include the cold and snowy Minneapolis area winters.

All of the grasses are premium bluegrass, with eight different seed blends developed specifically for Wagner Sod Company to meet the varied needs of their customers. They offer both standard rolls (2-feet by 6-feet), for installation, delivery or pickup, and large rolls (2-feet wide by 105-to-115-feet long), which they install. Their website, www.wagnersod.com, promotes the benefits of large rolls for their more efficient installation, up to 66 percent fewer seams, and less chance for washout in heavy rain situations. Willard reports their customer base is about 20 percent residential, 45 percent homebuilders, and 35 percent commercial. “We install the majority of our sod,” he says. “Probably 90 percent of what we sell.”

They incorporated the fully automated sod harvester around 2000. “Trebro AutoStack,” says Willard. “Love them. The time savings is great. They go so fast and smooth.” They brought in Brouwer big roll harvesting and installation equipment soon afterward. Which, Paul reports, enabled Willard to run an even more efficient sod operation. “He has four employees for harvesting and loading, two drivers for the two semis; and eight employees that are cross-trained to mow, plant, handle general turf care and work with the row crops.”

At the Inver Grove Heights site, Norb concentrates more on the landscaping and sod installation and Paul more on the irrigation. But, Norb says, “We weigh ourselves with heavy hands here. We do grading and site preparation, as well as all the design and installation

work. Paul and I both bid job projects, and whoever bids the project develops the plan for it and walks it through to competition. If it's your bid; it's your project." That system is a big part of building long-lasting customer relationships, a key to the company's success. It also takes a great deal of internal coordination to keep multiple projects flowing smoothly.

The company is a true family business. Paul says, "Katie, Willard's daughter, was in charge of the design and landscaping, and handled much of that internal coordination, but she's opted to 'retire' for a while and focus more on her four kids. Chelsey, Norb's daughter, now serves as executive assistant, working with me in the office. We currently have two other office personnel to help with orders and organizing and following through with our projects. We also have a one-person service department to ensure equipment repairs and maintenance are followed through."

Norb adds, "Nick, Paul's son, began working with us at a young age. He now drives semis, as well as the other trucks, and can operate the loaders. Our brother-in-law Dave is my right-hand-man, helping schedule and oversee the grading operations and stepping in to assist on the landscaping side, when we need help there. Zach, one of our nephews, is a grading machine operator. Another nephew, Troy, works in our landscaping department." And then, there are the family friends that have become company employees and the long-term employees that have become friends—all of whom the Wagner brothers consider part of the family.

In fact, that family atmosphere is so strong, that several employees who had moved on to other companies end up coming back to Wagner Sod. In the humble way so typical of all three Wagner brothers, Norb says, "It's kind of surprising, actually."



Katie, Willard Wagner's daughter, works the company's booth at the Minneapolis Home & Garden Show. They participate in this "show and sell" event each year.

The reason those employees come back? "You acknowledge me; you let me know I count as a person; not just a body doing a job." "You understand what it takes to do the work. If there's a problem, you work with me to figure it out." "You listen if I have ideas on how to do something quicker or more efficiently." "You care about me when I have a personal problem and are willing to work with me throughout the process." Which all comes back to family—and feeling like a valued family member.

Beyond the positions listed above, the staff is divided into specific crews, some overseen by Norb and some by Paul. Norb has a grading crew, with one foreman and three operators; two sod installation crews that each consist of from eight to ten employees; one plant installation crew of three; and two mowing crews. Paul has an irrigation service manager, three irrigation service technicians, and an irrigation installation crew of four.

Norb and Paul work together to coordinate the irrigation and the landscape planting segments of the projects. Then Norb and Willard coordinate the grading and the sod installation.

Norb says, "Everything is prescheduled two to three weeks in advance, working around that master calendar to coordinate the scheduling with the different contractors. Making sure everything goes as scheduled is already kind of crazy and the weather can make it even more so." Of course, they also need to work in the small sod installations and deliveries; the sod pickup orders; and the walk-in customers at the retail store.

Adjusting After the Crash

The 2008 housing market crash hit the Minneapolis area as hard as most regions. The Wagner brothers looked at diversification beyond the sod, again tapping into their understanding of the service needs of their customers. Norb says, "The crash made us simplify things and isolate our operations to the point where we made money in a smaller format rather than the larger one. We concentrated more on the full package, rather than the individual segments of it, developing the primary landscaper concept. That gave us the flexibility to work in more areas. We also found the reputation for reliability that we had been building since 1960 was a strong selling point across all markets. We could do the landscape design and installation; or the irrigation design and installation; and we could do the maintenance."

Paul adds, "They might not have been building or buying new homes, but those that already had homes were more willing to stick with what they had and make it better with renovations and upgrades."

Their strategy has worked so well that, a few years after the crash, they were able to upgrade much of their equipment, everything from dump trucks and Bobcats to semis and



The Wagner brothers and their entire staff look forward to hosting TPI's Field Day attendees and hope to deliver a beautiful summer day like this one.

harvesters. Norb says, "In this industry, you need up-to-date equipment to improve efficiency."

That's especially important in the tight labor market of the last three or four years. Paul says, "We do advertise in some magazines through the school districts and the churches, and while we do get some applicants from it, there are very few that we hire that way. We're most successful using that same kind of 'friend hiring' mentality that our Dad used when we were kids. Our employees know if they are aware of someone who needs a job, they can bring them in. They all know our expectations, so they're not likely to suggest someone they know is not going to work out."

Marketing is ongoing for the Wagner brothers. Their vans and trucks are traveling billboards, bright and eye-catching, with the company name, website and phone number prominently-displayed. They have a social media presence with both their website and Facebook. The website has become a very useful tool for customer outreach and interaction, especially with the residential segment of their business.

Norb says, "Paul and I try to do direct outreach with the builders, catching up with those we typically work with when they're out in the field. The project managers in that industry often jump from builder to builder. We'll have them contact us from the purchasing department of the new place, so we grow the business with another company.

And because of our reputation, we get a lot of word-of-mouth referral business, too." The partners continue to grow the market of those who want to "Beautify with Family Tradition."

Willard, Norb and Paul are looking forward to hosting the many TPI members that will be coming to their farm in July. They and their team will make sure all is ready to showcase the many static displays of equipment, products, and services, and the in-field demonstrations of harvesters, mowers, tractors, forklifts, tillers, installers and cultivators. There will be plenty to see, and it's sure to be a great Field Day for everyone.

TPI Seed Test Plots

The TPI Seed Test Plot Program will be held in conjunction with the 2019 TPI Summer Convention & Field Day. Viewing will take place during the Field Day, on Thursday, July 25, at Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company's sod farm in Northfield, Minnesota. As promised, this year's seed test plots will be within easy walking distance of the exhibit areas to ensure maximum ease of access for Field Day attendees.

The program was established in 1992 as a means of offering Convention attendees greater levels of information, as well as providing turfgrass seed companies with greater exposure and marketing opportunities. Straight cool-season turfgrass seed varieties and seed blends could be submitted. For 2019, there are a total of 11 participating companies that submitted a total of 54 variety/blend entries.

Seed samples were sent to TPI Headquarters where they were assigned a unique number to ensure the source could not be identified. Those anonymous seed samples were provided to Dr. Brian Horgan, Professor and Extension Turfgrass Specialist at the University of Minnesota, for planting during the first week of September. The seed was applied, in accordance with National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) recommended rates, into at least two non-adjacent plots, approximately five-feet by five-feet. Working with the host farm, Dr. Horgan utilized a grid chart to note the specific locations of each sample, using the unique number provided by TPI.

After planting, the Wagner Sod staff maintained the area in routine fashion, identical to their standard maintenance practices. There were no special applications of materials (fertilizer, pesticides or water) or any mowing beyond that received by the adjacent sod fields. Willard Wagner, co-owner and farm manager, reported that, as spring green-up was occurring, all the seed plots were coming in well and looking good.

Suz Trusty is co-editor of *Turf News*.

All photos courtesy of Wagner Sod, Landscaping & Irrigation Company Inc.





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SARA LECHLIDER

AWARDED DR. HENRY W. INDYK SCHOLARSHIP



Sara Lechlinder has been awarded the four-year Dr. Henry W. Indyk Scholarship, which is administered by The Lawn Institute (TLI). She was awarded the one-year scholarship in 2017. Sara is the daughter of Doug and Robin Lechlinder, Laytonsville Landscaping, Inc., Laytonsville, Maryland. A student at Purdue University, she will

be starting her junior year this fall, with double majors in Agribusiness Management and Turfgrass Management.

Ryan Musselman, Sara's fall semester 2017 professor for Agribusiness Industry View and her Academic Advisor, wrote his letter of recommendation at the end of the first semester of her sophomore year. He reported, "Miss Lechlinder has excelled in the classroom earning a 3.60 cumulative GPA with 66 credits earned towards her degree." Musselman further noted that Sara, "... actively seeks opportunities to develop herself as a leader. Recently she has added a global perspective as she studied abroad in Italy, joined the Passport program to host students studying abroad at Purdue, and chose to participate in Issues 360 to learn how to communicate agriculture's story to many different viewpoints." And Musselman added, "'Sara is motivated, driven and seeks areas where not only she can grow, but also where she can help others grow.'"

Sara reported becoming an Issues 360 Class VI Fellow taught her that, "It's important to have a two-way conversation to engage with the consumer, rather than delivering a preset message." Sara's study trip to Italy centered around food preparation, marketing, and the cultural differences in food. She says, "An eye-opening part of the trip was learning how much more they embraced organic agriculture."

From May through August of 2018, Sara interned at Willard Agri-Services, where she scouted fields for weed and pest pressure and worked with the company's sales representatives to determine the appropriate chemical plan for growers. She'll spend the summer of 2019 as a sales

and agronomy intern for Helena Chemical Company, covering a sales territory from Champaign to Donovan, Illinois. She says, "Because of my prior experience, I'll be spending less time in the field and more time selling to growers. I'm looking forward to that and I'm very excited to do it."

While the sales field is still a strong interest for Sara, over the last year, she's changed her focus. "I am directly majoring in Turfgrass Science, while also pursuing an additional major in Agribusiness Management, in hopes to take over our family turf farm and continue to produce a high quality turfgrass while incorporating advanced precision agriculture into our operation."

In addressing, "How do you see the turfgrass industry changing in the future?" Sara reported, in her 19 years, "I have witnessed technology completely transform my family's turfgrass operation." Referring to harvesting, she wrote, "In just approximately ten years, I have observed a team requirement dwindle down to a one-man operation, with assistance through technological advancements. This important restructuring of resources in a small operation is crucial and opens opportunities for many other tasks to be completed."

Anticipating even more genetic development in drought-tolerant turfgrass varieties, Sara noted they will aid turfgrass producers, "... in the conservation of water as well as the conservation of resources on operations ..." And further reported, "Incredible technologies are about to enter our industry and better it by reallocating resources, conserving resources and making processes increasingly more efficient."

In her second essay, Sara wrote, "The turfgrass industry has shaped me to be the perfectionist that I am today. Our industry is filled with minute differences that have a huge impact and importance on outcomes." She wrote about those differences in terms of turfgrass varieties and their performance. She addressed the requirement of close examination of the turfgrass crop to detect diseases. She wrote, "A perfect cut and perfect stripes are essential in the green industry for aesthetic purposes. I feel that because I grew up around these processes, I too, have been one to never be satisfied with an average product." She closed with, "'The turfgrass industry has given me a competition and achiever mentality, and a desire to have the best 'product' or outcome every single time.'"



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KRYSTA BOUCHARD

AWARDED DR. HENRY W. INDYK SCHOLARSHIP



Krysta Bouchard has been awarded the one-year Dr. Henry W. Indyk Scholarship, which is administrated by The Lawn Institute (TLI). Krysta is the daughter of Brock and Kerie Bouchard of Kingston Turf Farms, West Kingston, Rhode Island. Brian Bouchard is her grandfather. Krysta will enter The

University of Rhode Island this fall majoring in Psychology and minoring in Biological Chemistry.

In her scholarship application, in response to the question, “How will your course of study have the potential to impact the turfgrass industry?” Krysta wrote, “I am seeking a doctoral degree in medicine and hope to pursue a career in pediatric psychiatry. I want to work towards erasing the stigma which surrounds mental illness. I believe that this career choice will be difficult, yet extremely rewarding, and I look forward towards beginning my future. With turfgrass in mind, I do believe that my course of study will have the potential to impact the industry. Many of the turf practices which I am aware of are family-run, along with the stresses of work, I know that many family businesses feel pressure managing their family relationships. Hopefully, in my practice I will be able to help those individuals impacted to sustain a better relationship with the family members who they are working besides and improve the efficiency and joy of their individual turfgrass farms.”

With Advanced Placement and Honors classes included in her high school studies, Krysta’s GPA is 4.58, on a scale of 4.00. In her letter of recommendation, Sandra Laub, teacher of Chariho High School’s 12 Honors English class, wrote of Krysta’s “...winning personality, intellectual promise, and just plain kindness.” Laub also wrote, “I especially admire Krysta’s ability to see the positive in everything. She expresses her unique take on the world—one that is always intellectually curious, pushing herself deeper into unexplored idea territory.”

That intellectual curiosity is exhibited by seeking a virtual course in psychology (because her high school did not offer one) interacting with other participants, including adults from around the world, as well as fellow high school students in other states. And, intrigued by her family’s French-Canadian background, Krysta began studying French in sixth grade “and loved it so much I kept with it throughout high school.” She earned the “Silver Seal of Bi-literacy” in 2018.

In her essay on “How do you see the turfgrass industry changing in the future?” Krysta wrote, “Although the topic of genetically modified products is controversial, I feel that GMOs are used in all aspects of today’s society and believe that the future of the turfgrass industry will begin to hold genetically modified seed in a more positive light.”

This summer, Krysta will be working at the ice cream shop Lickety Splits a second year and, as one of the older and more experienced employees, will be helping train those newly hired. During the week, she’ll be working with her Dad in the office at Kingston Turf Farms, focusing on social media. Krysta says, “I’m super excited. I have not worked in the business before. I suggested we add a program to our website for customers to place orders online. We’ll be meeting with the website developers to set it up. It should help us gain a younger customer base, including the younger landscapers. I’ll be able to apply ideas about advertising and incentives from my Advanced Placement business class to attract buyers to our store. I’m also looking forward to learning more about the differences in the various grasses we offer and the farming aspect of the business.”

In her essay addressing “How has the turfgrass industry shaped your personal character?” Krysta closed with, “I believe it was very important for me, as I grew up, to see how my father and grandfather approach challenges and work diligently and believe their actions have greatly impacted who I have become as a young adult. The turfgrass industry has positively shaped generations of my family, and I feel so lucky to have gained these admirable characteristics which will help me all throughout my life.”



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ASSOCIATION UPDATES

For a trip around the world, and to keep up-to-date on turfgrass-related news nationally and internationally, become a Twitter follower of fellow turfgrass associations.

One of the associations *TurfNews* is following is the Turfgrass Growers Association (TGA), which states, “TGA is the only professional organisation in the UK and Ireland dedicated to the advancement of quality turf production. Since its formation, the TGA has been at the forefront of raising the standard of the cultivated turf supplied to professional and domestic customers.”

Here are a few highlights from *@TGATurfandWater*, the Twitter feed of the Turfgrass Growers Association. TGA states, “We tweet about turf, lawns, water and drought, and green news.”

TGA study tour stop #1: March 27 Visit to Vredo



First stop on the TGA study tour *@VredoDodewaard*. Thank you much for hosting us. *#turf2019*

TGA study tour stop #3: March 29 Trilo



Day 3 of the TGA study tour *@Trilo_equipment* *#TGA2019*

TGA study tour stop #2: March 28 Barenbrug's headquarters, breeding station and research fields.



The TGA study tour at the *@BarenbrugGroup* breeding station *#TGA2019*

Also newsworthy, retweeted by TGA *#TGA2019* and Originally Tweeted by TillersTurf *@tillersturf* on April 1.



Congratulations to Richard Owens who has been elected *@TGATurfandWater* Chairman. With over 30 years experience in the golf and turf industry he'll be a huge asset to the association.





DO NORTH AMERICAN CONSUMERS PREFER LOW-INPUT TURFGRASSES FOR THEIR HOME LAWNS?

By Chengyan Yue, PhD; Jingjing Wang, PhD student; Eric Watkins, PhD; Brian Horgan, PhD; Stacy A. Bonos, PhD; Kristen Nelson, PhD; James Murphy, PhD; and William Meyer, PhD

Turfgrasses have the potential to enhance the built environment and provide functional and environmental benefits such as pollinator habitat, stormwater management, mitigate soil erosion and urban heat island effect, and microclimate moderation. Turfgrasses also are important landscape components that contribute to quality of life by providing recreational and aesthetic benefits. In the United States, turfgrasses occupy 1.9 percent of the continental surface and cover an area three times larger than any irrigated crop.

In the past decades, turfgrass breeders have developed turfgrasses that exhibit low-input characteristics such as drought tolerance and reduced nitrogen requirements. Although previous studies document the relative strengths and comparable advantages of low-input turfgrass species, little is known about consumers' preferences for turfgrass attributes at a national or international level. Our specific objectives were to (1) estimate U.S. and Canadian consumers' willingness to pay for various turfgrass attributes, (2) identify the possible consumer preference differences and market segments, and (3) draw marketing implications based on identified consumer preferences and market segments.

The Method and Findings

An online turfgrass consumer preferences survey was conducted in 2014, with 1,934 usable U.S. responses and 723 usable responses from Canada. The average age of U.S. participants was 51. Among them, 49 percent were male, 61 percent were married, and 23 percent had one or more children under 12 years old. The average household size was two to three people, the mean education level was some college to a college diploma, and the average

annual household income was \$50,000. This sample was consistent with the U.S. census data (United States Census Bureau 2014) in terms of age (age group 15–83), gender, household size, education level, and income. Compared to the U.S. participants, Canadian participants were younger (average age of 41), more educated, with larger household size and higher household income.

With the online survey data, consumer preference was estimated using a statistical analysis that determined willingness to pay (the maximum price at which an individual was willing to buy one unit of the product) for each improved turfgrass trait assuming they were seeding 1000 square feet of a lawn. The estimated willingness to pay (WTP) premiums are shown in Figure 1. The price premiums represent how much more participants are willing to pay for turfgrass with a particular attribute level compared to the corresponding base level. The base level attributes were narrow leaf turfgrass, dark green, a lawn containing weeds, turfgrass that required high fertilizer inputs, a turfgrass that had the potential to lay over, high water use rates, high mowing frequency and poor ability to withstand foot traffic. The overall rankings of WTP premiums reflected similar preferences for turfgrass attributes among U.S. and Canadian participants, but Canadian participants had higher WTP premiums.

- In general, both U.S. and Canadian consumers were willing to pay the highest premium for better ability to withstand foot traffic (around \$16 for seed to cover 1000 square feet for U.S. consumers), followed by low mowing frequency (around \$13 for U.S. consumers), low fertilizer requirement (\$6 for U.S. consumers), and low water usage (\$6 for U.S. consumers).
- For the appearance attributes, participants would pay a high premium for turfgrass with no weeds (\$9 for U.S. consumers and \$15 for Canadian consumers). Texture (wide or narrow leaf) was not as important as other traits.

- Although the consumer demographics differ between the United States and Canada, the overall preferences and relative WTP for turfgrass traits are consistent across these two countries.

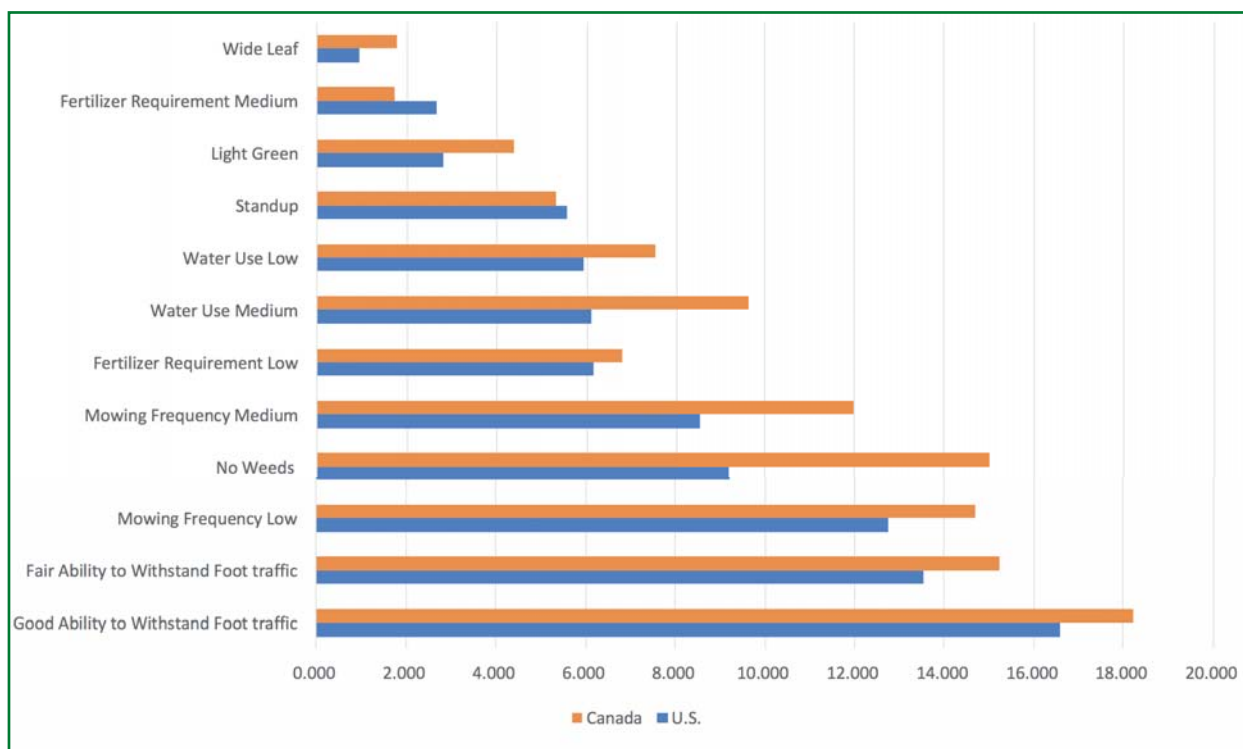


Figure 1. Willingness to Pay Premiums for Turfgrass Attributes (in U.S. dollars for seeds to cover 1,000 square feet)

Another objective for this study was to identify potential market segments with differentiated preference for turfgrass attributes. Specifically, we aimed to find the answers for the following questions: Are there different consumer segments with different preferences for turfgrass traits in the U.S. and Canada? If so, what are the characteristics of the different consumer segments? What strategies should the turfgrass industry adopt to better target these consumer segments?

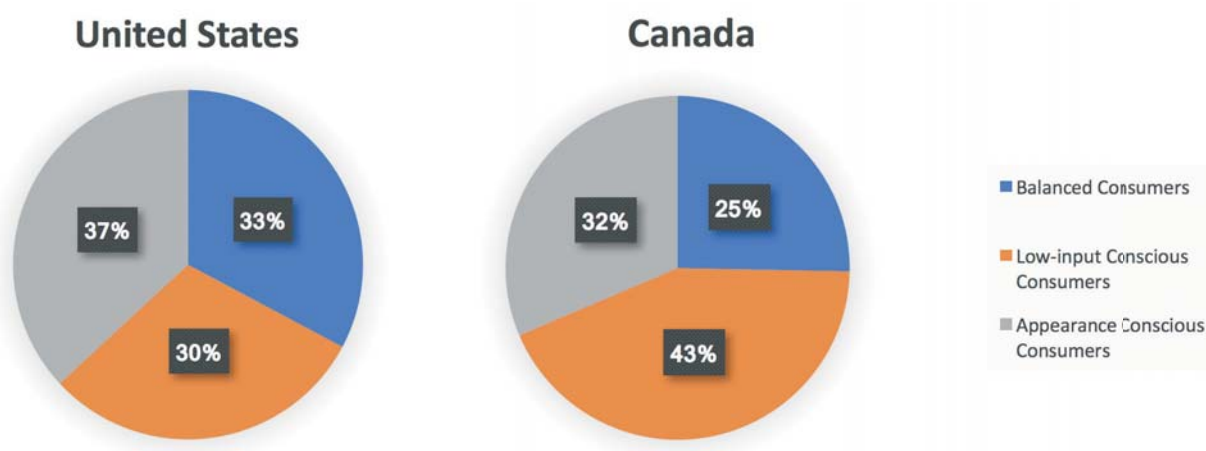


Figure 2. Consumer segments in U.S. and Canada

We found that consumers exhibit different preference patterns for turfgrass traits. In both the United States and Canada, three consumer segments were identified, and they are named as *Balanced Consumers*, *Low-input Conscious Consumers*, and *Appearance Conscious Consumers* (the shares of segments are displayed in Figure 2). Each segment's preferences for turfgrass traits are shown in Table 1.

- *Balanced Consumers* accounted for 33 percent of the U.S. sample and 25 percent of the Canadian sample. Consumers in this segment were most sensitive to price change. More specifically, they preferred light green grass to dark green grass; they also preferred turfgrasses that need less irrigation and with better ability to withstand foot traffic.
- *Low-input Conscious Consumers* accounted for 30 percent of the U.S. and more than 40 percent of the Canadian participants. *Low-input Conscious Consumers* had the strongest preferences for low-input attributes, such as lower irrigation, fertilization, and mowing requirements as well as better ability to withstand foot traffic. They also preferred turfgrasses that did not lay over when mowed and those with fewer weeds. Color and texture were not their primary concerns.
- About 37 percent of the U.S. participants and 32 percent of the Canadian participants belonged to the *Appearance Conscious Consumers* group. Participants in this group cared most about the appearance attributes; they would pay the highest premiums for turfgrasses with light green color, upright leaves, and low numbers of weeds. Although they exhibited preferences for home lawns with better ability to withstand foot traffic, this preference was not as strong as that of the other two groups. The preference for light green color is contrary to expectations of most people who sell turfgrass seed or sod. The *Appearance Conscious Consumers* were distinguishable from *Low-input Conscious Consumers* in that they cared little about the maintenance attributes.

Table 1. Characteristics of different Consumer segments

Balanced Consumers	Low-input Conscious Consumers	Appearance Conscious Consumers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are most sensitive to price. • Care about most of the turfgrass traits. • Prefer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ less irrigation ○ better wearing ability ○ light green color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibits the strongest preferences for low-input characteristics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ lower irrigation ○ less mowing ○ less fertilizer ○ better wearing ability • Prefer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ leaves stand up ○ fewer weeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the strongest preferences for appearance attributes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ light green color ○ upright leaves ○ fewer weeds • Care less about the maintenance attributes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are least knowledgeable about lawn maintenance • Maintain home lawn least frequently • Are likely to be Baby Boomers and females 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are most knowledgeable about lawn maintenance • Water and fertilize home lawns with modest frequency • Are most likely to be Generation X consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have modest knowledge about lawn maintenance • Water and fertilize home lawns most frequently • Are likely to be Generation Y consumers



During this Field Day presentation at the University of Minnesota attendees learned about fine fescues as a low-input turfgrass. Photo by David Hansen, University of Minnesota

Takeaways

Different consumer segments have different preferences and specific needs. With this in mind, turfgrass growers and those that market turfgrasses can take different strategies to promote turfgrass species based on characteristics.

- The market segment of Appearance Conscious Consumers accounted for more than one-third of both U.S. and Canadian participants, and we also found that they were more likely to be Generation Y consumers. This group of consumers only have modest knowledge on lawn maintenance. Therefore, they tend to irrigate and apply fertilizer more frequently in order to keep their home lawns looking good. Sod producers and retailers could use this information to target and market to Appearance Conscious Consumers by providing photos in marketing materials and ensuring high quality in-store samples are available for viewing. In addition, educating this group about how to maintain their home lawns more efficiently could benefit homeowners both economically and environmentally.
- Balanced Consumers consisted of more females and more Baby Boomers. Since this group was least knowledgeable about turfgrass maintenance and most sensitive to price change, it is not surprising that they maintain their home lawns least frequently. Producers and marketers could focus on producing sod using cultivars with the “balanced” traits. Retailers could use this information to adopt target marketing strategies to attract Balanced Consumers. Marketing strategies such as setting competitive prices for turfgrass and providing in-store coupons can help retailers attract Balanced Consumers. Turfgrass suppliers can also educate and inform Balanced Consumers about resource efficient lawn maintenance methods. Thus, price-sensitive Balanced Consumers could strive to have good-looking home lawns without spending too much money.
- The identification of low-input turfgrass consumers suggested that there exists a large potential market for low-input turfgrasses in both the United States and Canada. Low-input turfgrasses become one solution to fulfill consumers’ needs without sacrificing the environment because they support the use of less water, energy, and fertilizer. Sod producers should consider the size of the Low-input Conscious Consumers market segment when selecting cultivars for sod fields. In fact, a large proportion of the consumer market was not aware of the existence of low-input turfgrass species. By promoting low-input turfgrasses through advertisement and public media, the suppliers of low-input turfgrass sod could reach out to more consumers. In addition, consumers could be more informed about the benefits of low-input turfgrass, not only lower maintenance costs but also environmental benefits, such as water conservation and reduction in chemical use.

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HAPPENINGS

TPI Member on Team to Set Guinness World Record



The team celebrates after completing the 24-hour snowmobile run and covered 3,335 km and seems to have set a new Guinness World Record for Distance Covered in 24-hours.

Claus Zander, Zander Sod Co. Limited, King, ON, Canada, was one of a four-man team that attempted a Guinness World Record for “Snowmobile Greatest Distance in 24-Hours, Team.” Besides Zander, the other members of the team were: David Traill, Rich Lys and Wes Juszk. They were originally set to start on February 25, but a blizzard blew in and caused delays. So the actual attempt took place from 10 a.m. March 5 until 10 a.m. March 6.

The track was created in the middle of Lake Muskoka, ON, which is north of Toronto and west of Ottawa. It took a team of people to create the track, keep it groomed and provide all sorts of other support. The attempt was a fund raiser for Kelly Shires Breast Cancer Foundation and raised over \$21,250. Zander reports, “It was an amazing experience! The support of Volunteers and Sponsors made it possible for the four of us to ride to exceed the World record which has been standing since 2005. The rules dictated that the four riders could rotate as necessary, with the clock continuing for a 24-hour period. We rode an 800 machine for the first 2/3 of the period at which time we had worn out the drive sprocket. Rules stipulate that there is a 15 minute penalty to switch to another machine, we rode the new Polaris 850 for the final third of the event. It’s amazing how well the machines held up, 8,000 RPM hour after hour, hitting speeds in excess of 115 mph (185kph)! The best lap time having an average of 100 mph (160 kph).” They covered approximately 3,335 kilometers (2072 miles). All the evidence including the GPS data from GoGPS and Geotab has been submitted to the Guinness authorities. The team is anxiously awaiting the official recognition which could take up to several months.

There are many pictures and comments on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/356226174969591/?ref=sh>

TPI Member Recognized as one of Canada’s Best Managed Companies

Manderley Turf Products, Ottawa, Canada, has again been named one of Canada’s Best Managed Companies. They have renewed their Platinum Club status by maintaining their Best Managed status for seven years or more. Manderley was recognized for overall business performance and sustained growth. The 2019 Best Managed program award winners are amongst the best-in-class of Canadian owned and managed companies with revenues over \$15 million demonstrating strategy, capability and commitment to achieve sustainable growth. “The Manderley team is proud to have renewed our Platinum Club status with the Canada’s Best Managed Companies program,” says Wayne Moloughney, President, Manderley Turf Products. “This award highlights our commitment to innovation and continuous improvement and motivates us to continue to build on this level of success.”

Now in its 26th year, Canada’s Best Managed Companies is one of the country’s leading business awards programs recognizing Canadian-owned and managed companies for innovative, world-class business practices. Every year, hundreds of entrepreneurial companies compete for this designation in a rigorous and independent process that evaluates the caliber of their management abilities and practices.

Applicants are evaluated by an independent judging panel comprised of representatives from program sponsors in addition to special guest judges. 2019 Best Managed companies share commonalities that include a clear strategy and vision, investment in capability and commitment to talent. The Best Managed program is sponsored by Deloitte Private, CIBC, Canadian Business, Smith School of Business, and TMX Group.

For almost 60 years, Manderley has been a leader in the landscape industry, helping to grow greener communities by providing high quality, innovative lawn and garden products. Manderley is Canada’s largest sod producer, with over 60 million square feet sold annually. Manderley sod is grown and sold in the area surrounding Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Calgary, Edmonton and Northern Alberta. Manderley has also established a network of partner growers capable of servicing every major market in the country. Manderley is committed to making lawns more efficient by offering more sustainable choices, including their Less Water Sod, which consumes as little as half the water of a conventional lawn, and providing products such as seed, fertilizer and soil along with the know-how to keep a lawn healthy and looking great.

NTEP Adds Two Policy Committee Members

The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) has selected two industry entities to join their Policy Committee. A-LIST and TWCA have both been added and join land-grant universities, USGA, GCSAA, American Seed Trade Association, Oregon and Pacific Seed Associations and

HAPPENINGS

Turfgrass Producers International on this important voice of the natural turfgrass industry.

The Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf (A-LIST) and its members have long supported NTEP and this new channel will allow the A-LIST to refine messaging and research to align more closely with NTEP's national strategy. Currently, a component of the A-LIST's approval protocol, NTEP data is used to establish turf quality minimums and is integral to identifying varieties that require less inputs to maintain acceptable turf quality. The A-LIST has consistently promoted the use of NTEP as an independent testing ground and requires varieties in its own trials to concurrently be placed in NTEP trials as well. "We are very excited to be part of this influential group and look forward to playing a larger role in the national effort to promote sustainability in turfgrass," said Jeremy Husen, Executive Director of the A-LIST. "We believe the future of turfgrass requires all entities promoting sustainability to be on the same page and it makes sense that NTEP serve as the group to bring all those voices to the table."

The inclusion of Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance (TWCA) demonstrates an awareness of the importance of value-added traits to today's consumers and the changing role of turfgrass in how we think about landscapes and landscape design. In cooperation with NexGen Turf Research and Drs. Karcher and Richardson of the University of Arkansas, TWCA developed the technologies and methodologies that underpin all drought stress evaluation today. In addition to pioneering the work on drought stress evaluation TWCA also copyrighted the first protocol for objective evaluation of low maintenance trialing.

"We're obviously very happy to participate on this committee," says TWCA Program Administrator Jack Karlin. "Now, more than ever it's critical to present a unified message about the value of turf in our managed landscapes. We're really excited that NTEP has taken this step towards unifying our industry messaging."

Kevin Morris, Executive Director of NTEP said, "We are really excited to welcome both of these important alliances to the NTEP Policy Committee. With turf removal programs becoming more and more popular, and the perception of turf being water-wasting and unsustainable in some circles, the turf industry needs to unite in developing and marketing low-water using, low input and more sustainable turfgrasses."

NTEP has long been a central figure in the turfgrass industry serving a critical decision-making tool for breeders, producers, and sod farms alike. The Policy Committee meets several times a year and serves to coordinate and facilitate messaging about turfgrass and the importance of turfgrass research.

TurfMutt Celebrates Ten Years of Unleashing Imaginations to Make the Planet Greener, Communities Healthier

The highly successful TurfMutt environmental education and stewardship program celebrates its tenth anniversary of

teaching the value and benefits of the outdoors, specifically the contributions of our own backyards, community parks, and other managed landscapes. This year, the program expands its successful youth education program to middle schools around the country, adding new lessons and student activities, including a graphic story.

"For the last decade, TurfMutt's message has been simple: care for the green space around you, but equally important, get outside and enjoy it," says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), whose Foundation is the creative founder of TurfMutt. "Now we're expanding to include more students and their families to further promote the health and wellness benefits of being an 'outsider.'"

TurfMutt started as a pilot youth education program to schools in Sacramento in the fall of 2009, and has grown into a national program for kids, families, and communities. Today, TurfMutt is an official USGBC® Education Partner; as part of their global LEARNING LAB, TurfMutt has appeared on morning television shows, Lucky Dog and Ready Set Pet, and has been featured in Parade magazine. TurfMutt has reached more than 68 million teachers, students, and their families through its own outreach and via the materials created in collaboration with Scholastic. New lesson plans and a graphic story, both aimed at middle school youth, will explore TurfMutt's adventures in "saving the planet one yard at a time," and are designed to inspire students to improve the green spaces around them. An estimated eighteen thousand teachers will receive lessons plans and 460,000 students will receive the graphic story, which was included with Science World magazine.

The program's mascot is Lucky the TurfMutt, an animated version of a real-life rescue dog who is "pawing it forward" by inspiring students to care for the environment and appreciate its benefits. TurfMutt has also been involved in sponsoring adoption events. Learn more at www.TurfMutt.com

The TPI Family Mourns

The TPI family mourns with the David Bradley family at the loss of David's mother, Imogene Justus Bradley Miller. Mrs. Miller, 79, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, went to join our Lord on Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at her home. She was a graduate of Edneyville High School and had been employed as a professional secretary for many years prior to her career with the USDA as a crop insurance adjuster. Mrs. Miller is survived by her beloved husband of 27 years, Elmer Miller; two children, Leca Harris and her husband Rick, and David Bradley and his wife Linda; five grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and one brother, Kenneth Justus and his wife Glenda, and nephews. For the past 25 years, Mrs. Miller faithfully attended and sang in the choir of Hendersonville First Baptist Church. She had been a life-long member of Edneyville United Methodist Church, where her funeral was held on February 23.



TURF INDUSTRY NEWS

A-LIST Appoints Dr. Gregg Munshaw to Research Committee Chair Position

The Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf (A-LIST) recently announced the appointment of Dr. Gregg Munshaw to the position of Research Committee Chair. The Research Committee Chair is charged with managing all research-related activities within the organization. In addition to leading the A-LIST research committee (a combined industry/university policy group of researchers and breeders), Dr. Munshaw will be responsible for working with university cooperators to manage trials, promoting the program and its benefits through outreach opportunities and ensuring a continued commitment to transparency and integrity at the A-LIST. This appointment is in addition to the critical work Dr. Munshaw continues to undertake at the University of Kentucky. Munshaw has 25 years of direct turfgrass experience, having worked on golf courses, athletic fields, and in teaching, research, and extension positions at Mississippi State University and the University of Kentucky.

Munshaw is a native of western Canada. He earned his doctorate in turfgrass physiology from Virginia Tech. He also holds bachelor's and master's degrees in turfgrass science from the University of Kentucky.

Doug McCullen to Lead Newly Created Bayer Sales Region

The Turf and Ornamentals (T&O) business of Bayer, within the company's Crop Science division, has realigned its sales team, creating a new western sales region as part of its continued efforts to better meet the needs of its turf management customers across the United States. With this announcement, Doug McCullen has been promoted to Western Regional Sales Manager of the newly established Western Region, which serves customers from California through West Texas and northward into Wisconsin. "In our quickly evolving green industry, turf management professionals need more customized, regional recommendations than ever before," said Will MacMurdo, head of the Bayer U.S. T & O business. "With this natural realignment of our sales team, we have refined the conventional split between cool-season and warm-season turfgrass regions to introduce this new Western Region and ultimately sharpen our focus on the unique needs of our customers in each region of the country."

CAST Issues Study on Groundwater Depletion and Affects on Agriculture

The Council of Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) has issued a paper that examines the causes and consequences of groundwater depletion throughout the U.S. with a focus on how this will affect agriculture—the largest sector of groundwater use. The paper, "Aquifer Depletion and Potential Impacts on Long-term Irrigated Agricultural Productivity," was co-authored by Dr. John Tracy, Texas A&M University's Texas Water Resources Institute director, College Station.

According to the paper, fresh water remains a critical limiting resource around the world. As the population increases, demands for more food production and water supplies will stress valuable water resources, especially in locations sensitive to droughts. There are five main topics included: An overview of groundwater and its use in the U.S. An outline of geographical areas impacted by groundwater use. Consequences from depleting aquifers.

Mitigation efforts to reverse groundwater depletion. A case study on causes, consequences and mitigation of groundwater depletion. For a summary, go to <https://bit.ly/2T83VKK>. To read the full issue paper, go to <https://bit.ly/2EM1Z6C>.

University of Georgia's Team UGA Launches New Seashore Paspalum Website

Team UGA® at the University of Georgia has launched a new website (<https://gapaspalum.com/>) dedicated to seashore paspalum turfgrass. Originally created in 2016 to serve as a resource on the proper use, maintenance, and research of this highly salt-tolerant family of grasses, the new site has a new domain and updated content to better serve the members of the turf industry who want to learn about this salt tolerant turf. Team UGA consists of experts in warm season turfgrass breeding, pest resistance, management, licensing, certification, and foundation plant material production.

The website serves as a comprehensive, one-stop-shop for turfgrass professionals who are looking for information on planting, growing and maintaining seashore paspalum (*Paspalum vaginatum*) turfgrass. The website provides information on the benefits of seashore paspalum turf, as well as management tips for fertilization, mowing, disease control, insect control, and weed control, plus links to articles about the grass. The website also features a history of the Team UGA turfgrass breeding program, and a blog managed by Dr. Raymer of UGA.

Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission Launches New Website

To highlight the value of Washington state's turfgrass seed industry, the seven-member Board of Directors of the Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission recently launched a new website at waturfgrass.org.

The website provides information about turfgrass seed grown by farmers in Washington state, and explains how an assessment on production funds Commission advocacy and activities. A searchable database serves as an archive for research studies funded by the Commission on turfgrass seed production, weed control, disease suppression, and genetics.

FIFA Selects Platinum TE™ Paspalum for World Cup 2022

After years of comprehensive testing, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy selected Platinum TE as the playing surface for all stadiums and training sites hosting the November 2022 event in Qatar. In a joint venture, Aspire Sports Turf of Qatar and international sports turf consulting giant STRI conducted extensive research on which to base their selection. Varieties of seashore paspalum, bermudagrass, and zoysia turfgrasses were tested at multiple sites. Platinum TE Paspalum proved to be the most durable and shade tolerant of the turfgrasses tested, outperforming the other varieties in recovery as well. Establishment and grow-in from stolons were also quicker with the Platinum TE.

Grassing has begun at multiple stadiums and training facilities. To ensure genetic purity and the highest quality, the Platinum TE Paspalum being utilized is licensed and certified plant material from global turfgrass supplier Atlas Turf International. Grassing will continue as the remaining facilities are completed over the next two years.

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TURF INDUSTRY NEWS

Locus AG Announces New "Probiotic" Rapidly Impacts Yields, Greenhouse Gases

Positive data is confirming there is a unique solution to reduce greenhouse gases that is working today through an unexpected source: agricultural "probiotics." Locus Agricultural Solutions® (Locus AG) states that Rhizolizer®, its "line of customizable, non-GMO soil treatments has proven to be the first microbial tool to successfully improve struggling agricultural productivity while also reducing greenhouse gases and sequestering carbon—making it the first low-cost solution that optimizes grower profits and improves environmental impact."

The company further states, "The Rhizolizer "probiotic" line is the first data-backed approach that is currently available and addresses both challenges without changing grower practices. It has a rapid impact—data is showing up to 40 percent increases in yields and better crop quality within two to three treatments. Data collected in collaboration with respected third parties show that one Rhizolizer-treated acre can also sequester up to 4.38 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents per year.

This has the potential to offset greenhouse gas emissions comparable to one car or 464 gallons of gas per year."

Dr. Paul Zorner, CEO of Locus AG, says, "We recognize there are many variables involved, but we are engaged in a significant research program to extend soil carbon sequestration to additional crops and locations, as well as to any irrigated land including residential lawns."

The company reports, "Ongoing trials are in progress with third parties to uncover additional productivity and environmental benefits, which experts predict will continue to drive usage throughout the country." For more information on Locus AG, its fermentation technology or Rhizolizer's sustainable growing benefits, visit LocusAG.com.

FIFA Rules No Artificial Fields at 2023 Women's World Cup

The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) recently announced that only natural grass fields will be allowed for the 2023 Women's World Cup. This decision has been communicated to all nations and entities interested in bidding on the tournament. The decision follows the controversy over the use of artificial surfaces used at the 2015 tournament in Canada. Some players launched a gender discrimination suit—which was later withdrawn—over FIFA's use of artificial turf for women but men's World Cup games have always been on natural grass. The women claimed the artificial surfaces are less forgiving than grass and impact the game because of the concerns over injury. They also claimed balls travel and bounce differently on artificial turf. FIFA said it wanted the same surface in every stadium. This year's 24-team tournament in France will not have any artificial pitches at the nine venues. While FIFA has made it clear such surfaces won't be acceptable in 2023, either. What is permitted is the hybrid system used where synthetic grass fibers are woven in between and beneath the natural grass. FIFA is also requiring that each team training facility have at least one natural grass field.

NALP Research Finds American's Still Love Lawns

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) kicked off National Lawn Care Month by unveiling new research that found that Americans' love affair with their lawns is going strong. The survey, conducted by the Engine Group on behalf of NALP, found that 81 percent of all Americans have a lawn, and a vast majority – 79 percent – say that a lawn is an important feature when renting or buying a home. In fact, when asked to prioritize home features, respondents ranked a nice size yard second, falling only behind a renovated kitchen – and well ahead of other popular features including updated bathrooms, storage and hardwood floors. Perhaps most tellingly, the research found that younger generations of Americans place an even higher value on lawns than their parents and grandparents. When ranking home features, a nice size lawn was the number one priority among millennials, beating out even an updated kitchen. Eighty-two percent of millennials report that having a lawn is important when renting or buying a home (compared to 81 percent in Generation X and 77 percent of baby boomers).

"While some may assume that trends toward urbanization or the increased use of electronics and technology have resulted in a decreased interest in lawns among younger Americans, the results of our research found just the opposite," said Missy Henriksen, vice president of public affairs for NALP. "Overall, the results confirm what professionals in the lawn care and landscape industry have long known—Americans have a great appreciation for the value that healthy lawns bring to their lives."

The survey found that beyond valuing lawns, Americans are indeed making regular use of their yards. Forty-seven percent of Americans say they entertain in their yards at least once a month, while 57 percent use their yards for recreation at least monthly. Above all, the results suggest that yards are seen as a respite for Americans. A whopping 77 percent of respondents report relaxing in their yards at least once a month, and about one in three Americans (32 percent) garden in their yards multiple times a week.

Americans also are enjoying grass and green spaces beyond their doorsteps. The research found that Americans visit public parks and playgrounds more often than movie theaters, pools and beaches, bowling alleys and museums.

"Lawns and public green spaces provide a backdrop for Americans' memory-making moments while offering tremendous benefits for our communities and environment," says Henriksen. "The research supports the important work that lawn care professionals do to create and maintain healthy lawns across the country."

Turfgrass Producers of Texas Launch New Website

Representing more than 80 sod producers and vendor members, the Turfgrass Producers of Texas recently launched a new website to help consumers select the grass that is right for their home lawn or project, and locate a turfgrass producer nearby to supply the grass. The new website can be found at <https://TexasGrass.com>. The website features a membership directory with an interactive locator map, turfgrass maintenance tips, and a library of videos on Texas turfgrass management plus information on membership, event registration, varieties of grass grown in the state, and research papers. The site offers tools for consumers, landscapers and turf industry experts.



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Please contact Marshall Hamilton at 814-558-6304 or mhamilton8148@gmail.com.

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All classified ads are subject to review; TPI does not endorse any ad and reserves the right to edit or decline any ad.



Wherever you see the camera icon, visit www.TurfGrassSod.org to view pictures of the advertised items. When viewing the electronic version of this page, just click on any of the icons above that interest you to proceed directly to the advertiser's supplied picture.

AD INDEX FOR MAY/JUNE **TURF NEWS** MAGAZINE

A-LIST	23	R&R Products, Inc.	13
Advanced Equipment	69	Sod Production Services	3
Brouwer Kesmac	55, 69	STEC Equipment, Inc.	39
Cameron Financial	69	TAMANET (USA)	19
First Products	41	The Lawn Institute	69
HydroStraw/Summit Seed	43	Trebro Manufacturing, Inc.	15, 53
Jonathan Green & Sons, Inc.	37	Trilo	69
KWMI	63, 69	Trimax	5
Landmark Turf & Native Seed	Back Cover	Turf Tick Products BV	Inside Back Cover
Magnum	Inside Front Cover, 46-47	Turfgrass Information Center	69
Progressive Turf Equipment, Inc.	67	Turfgrass Producers International	33, 45, 57

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TURF INDUSTRY CALENDAR

MAY

May 20

Virginia Tech Research Classic Field Day

Midlothian, VA

<https://www.cses.vt.edu/>

May 27-28

ETS Field Days

Padova, Italy

<http://www.turfgrassociety.eu/news/ets-field-days-2019-date-announced/>

JUNE

June 19

University of Florida Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo & Field Day

Jay, FL

<http://turf.ufl.edu/>

June 20

Cornell University Turfgrass Field Day

Ithaca, NY

<https://turf.cals.cornell.edu/>

June 24-28

Asia Pacific Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition

South Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

<https://www.queensland.com/en-us/event/asia-pacific-turfgrass-conference-and-trade-exhibition-2019>

June 25

Virginia Tech AREC Turf Field Day

Hampton Roads, VA

<https://www.cses.vt.edu/>

JULY

July 9

Purdue University Turf and Landscape Field Day

West Lafayette, IN

<https://turf.purdue.edu/field-day.html>

July 11

University of Kentucky Turfgrass Field Day

Lexington, KY

<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/ukturf/>

July 13 - 16

American Hort's Cultivate '19

Columbus, OH

<http://www.cultivate19.org/>

July 14 - 16

Texas Turfgrass Association Summer Conference

College Station, TX

<https://texasturf.com/>

July 17

University of Maryland Turfgrass Field Day

College Park, MD

<http://www.md turf council.org/event-3237996>

July 17

University of Massachusetts Turfgrass Field Day

South Deerfield, MA

<https://ag.umass.edu/turf/research/umass-turf-research-field-day>

July 23

University of Wisconsin-Madison Turfgrass Field Day

Madison, WI

<https://wisconsin-turfgrassassociation.org/wisconsin-turfgrass-summer-field-day/>

July 23-25

TPI Summer Convention & Field Day

Minneapolis, MN

www.turfgrassod.org/pages/summer-program/



July 24

University of Arkansas Turfgrass Field Day

Fayetteville, AR

<https://bumperscollege.uark.edu/future-students/hort-land-turf.php>

July 30

University of Missouri Turfgrass Field Day

Columbia, MO

https://calendar.missouri.edu/event/turfgrass-landscape-field-day_939#.XJ06CZhKiUk

July 30

Rutgers Field Days 1 - Golf & Fine Turf

North Brunswick, NJ

<https://njta.wildapricot.org/>

July 31

Rutgers Field Days 2 - Lawn, Landscape, Sports Fields

Freehold, NJ

<https://njta.wildapricot.org/>

AUGUST

August 1

Kansas State University Turfgrass Field Day

Olathe, KS

<https://www.k-state.edu/turf/events/index.html>

August 14

Clemson University Turfgrass Field Day

Clemson, SC

<https://calendar.clemson.edu/event/clemson-university-annual-turfgrass-research-education-field-day#.XJ06IJhKiUk>

August 14

Michigan State University Turfgrass Field Day

East Lansing, MI

<http://www.michiganturfgrass.org/MSU-Fieldgrass-Field-Day>

August 14

University of Nebraska Turfgrass Field Day

Lincoln, NE

<https://nebraskaturfgrass.com/>

August 14

North Carolina State University Turfgrass Field Day

Raleigh, NC

<https://www.turfgrass.ncsu.edu/2019/02/save-the-date-august-14-2019-for-turfgrass-field-day/>

August 20

Mississippi State University Turfgrass Field Day

Starkville, MS

<http://www.msturfassociation.org/>

August 20

Virginia Tech Lawn, Landscape, and Sports Turf Field Day

Blacksburg, VA

<https://www.cses.vt.edu/>

August 29

Oregon State University Turfgrass Field Day

Corvallis, OR

<https://horticulture.oregonstate.edu/beaverturf/research-turfgrass-oregon-state-university>

August 29

University of Tennessee Turf and Ornamental Field Day

Knoxville, TN

<https://ag.tennessee.edu/Pages/fielddays.aspx>

For additional calendar items, visit www.TurfGrassSod.org. If you are planning an industry event of interest to our readers please send the information to: kcooper@TurfGrassSod.org and put "Industry Calendar" in the subject line.

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To learn more about our current TPS sod seed blends for sports, lawn and landscaping applications, contact Larry Humphreys at larry@turfproducersselect.com.