

Certification: Why, How, and When

by Dale Getz and Steve Trusty

In March 1997, the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) Certification Committee began developing a much-needed Certification Program to serve the sports turf industry. When it's up and running, the program will boost the profile of sports turf managers across the country, and it will lend further credibility to the profession as we move toward a new millennium.

Why?

Certification will provide a vehicle to raise the level of professionalism within the sports turf industry. It will establish credentials that signify a specific level of expertise to open career opportunities and promote the profession. It will provide a means of recognition for attaining a level of expertise

and performance as professionals in the industry. It will also stimulate and motivate improved performance and increased professionalism.

Certification will increase opportunities for education and training. In addition, the recognition achieved through certification will create and promote better salary opportunities.

How?

Certification applicants must earn a minimum of 40 points through a combination of education and experience as outlined in **Figure 1**.

Potential applicants will receive a packet containing a credentials booklet which outlines the basics of the program and application procedures. Application forms and

education worksheets will be included in the packet.

Applicants will find a List of Competencies in four main areas: agronomics, pest management, administration, and sports-specific field management. Each segment is introduced by the statement, "In order to qualify for certification, potential applicants should be able to..." Specific competencies in that area follow.

A Resource List for the Sports Turf Manager, a general educational tool which is available from STMA Headquarters, is also included in the certification applicant packet.

Qualified applicants will be scheduled for a written multiple-choice test developed for the four major sections. These proctored tests will be conducted at accepted assessment centers.

Figure 1. Draft of basic requirements for certification consideration **

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

An application and resume will be submitted for evaluation to determine eligibility to take the certification test. Applicants must have a minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent. Applicants must achieve a minimum of 40 points through a combination of education and experience with the following criteria:

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE POINTS

Program	Education	Points
<i>(See current list of approved programs) Note: These points may be added to points listed below. Points listed below are not cumulative. Applicants can only receive points for the highest educational level achieved.</i>		
Associate Degree		
Non-turf		2
Turf or related plant science		8
Bachelors Degree		
Non-turf		8
Turf or related plant science		16
Advanced Degree: Masters or Doctorate		
Turf or related plant science		24

Activity	Experience	Points/year*
Sports Turf Crew		1
Supervisory Sports Turf (Assistant, Foreman, or Lead Position)		3
Sports Turf Manager (Top Position)		6
Assistant Golf Course Superintendent		1 ¹ / ₂
Golf Course Superintendent		3

NOTE: No more than 50 percent of total experience points can be earned on a golf course.

* **A minimum of 1500 hours must be spent on the job to qualify for each claimed year.**

** Formal review of these requirements was not completed when this publication went to print.

The test will also be offered under similar supervised conditions at STMA's annual conference in January 2000.

Applicants must pass each section of the test to achieve certification. A score of 80 percent is considered a passing grade. Individuals who do not receive a passing grade in one or more sections of the test will have to repeat these sections within the parameters outlined in the credentials booklet. Individuals who fail to pass a section multiple times or fail to complete the testing process within the established time limitation will need to start over.

According to legal guidelines, any association or profession is able to certify only that an individual has met the outlined requirements for testing and has correctly answered the required exam questions. STMA will further certify that test questions were developed from competencies established by professionals, educators, and researchers within the industry. STMA will not certify such things as an individual's work ethic, job performance, judgment, or decision making aptitude.

Once individuals become certified, they can keep their status active through a certification renewal process. They will be asked to meet specific standards within a three-year cycle.

Standards will include Continuing Education Units (CEUs), as defined and accepted by national educational accreditation standards. These credits will require pre-approval and proof of participation.

The certification renewal process will require members to meet specified levels of industry service points (ISPs). These points will be earned through participation in such activities as sports field related service projects.

Contributions to the sports turf industry will also help applicants earn points toward certification. These include such activities as providing articles for newsletters, magazines, or other publications; coordinating, hosting, or speaking at chapter or green industry events; or serving as an officer, board member, or committee chair within the sports turf industry.

Specific CEU and ISP requirements will be provided in the application packet, and they'll be sent to all newly certified individuals. STMA Headquarters will serve as the hub for information on certification and the certification process.

When?

The updated Certification Program is scheduled for presentation at the 10th annual STMA Conference & Exhibition in Mesa, AZ, January 1999. Fine-tuning of the program was taking place as this

issue was going to press. The Certification Committee anticipates that the initial call for applications will be issued during the first half of 1999.

Will the program be perfect as presented? No. Will continued fine-tuning be necessary? Yes.

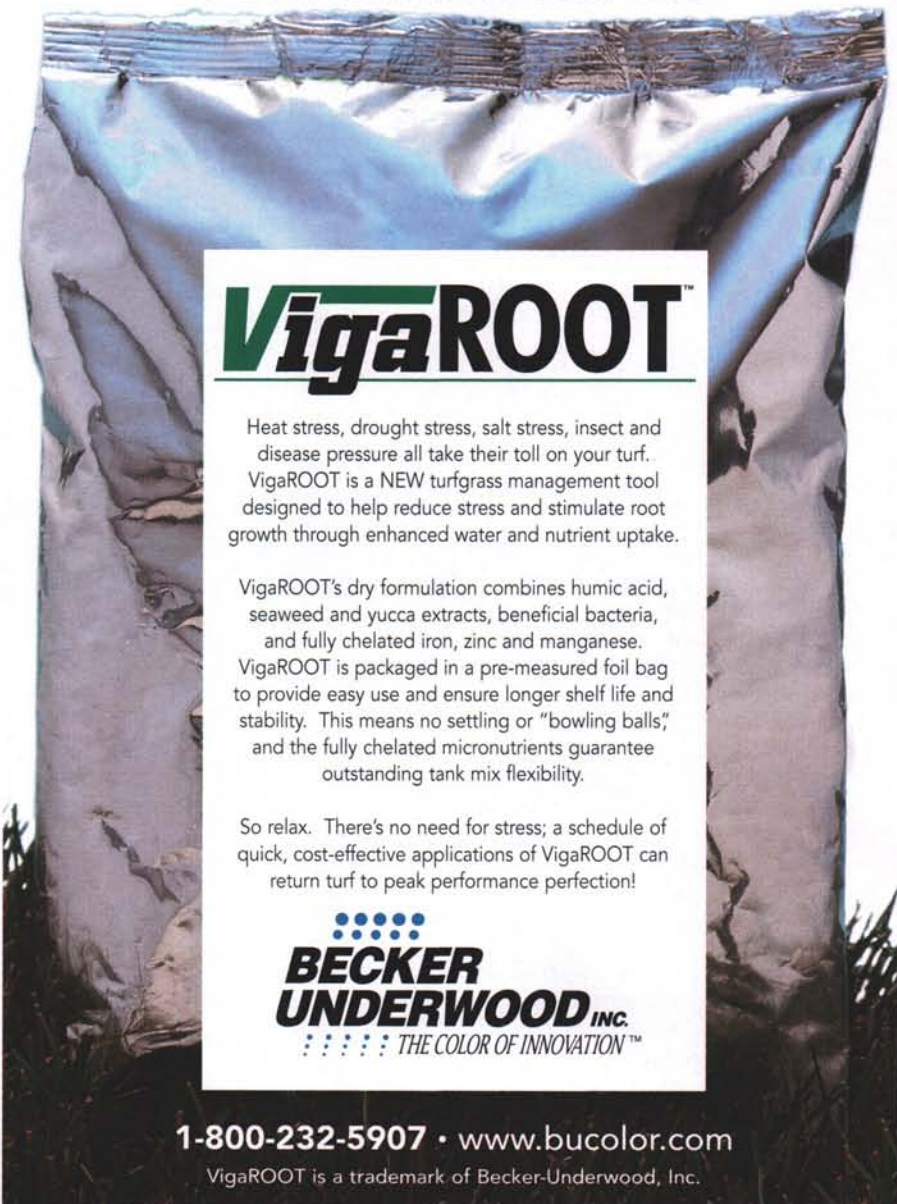
Sports turf management is a complex and multi-faceted profession. With continual introduction of new technology and increasing demands for field use, STMA's Certification Program will seek to reflect and be

responsive to industry progress. The three-year certification renewal cycle will ensure that certified individuals remain responsive to industry progress as well. □

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