



Courtesy of Graff's Turf Farms

Improve your “soft skills”

EMPLOYERS place a premium on soft skills in today's work environment. It is no longer enough that you are technically competent in turfgrass management; more and more employers assess you on the qualities and habits that reveal if you are a good employee and a team player. According to Kate Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com editor, “Companies value soft skills because research suggests and experience shows that they can be just as

important an indicator of job performance as hard skills.”

Whether you are in a job-seeking mode or are a long-time employee, successful soft skills play a crucial role in employment security and advancement opportunities. Good communication skills top the list. According to Quintessential Careers, “By far, the one skill mentioned most often by employers is the ability to listen, write, and speak effectively.”

Exhibiting a strong work ethic, a pos-



It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get (and keep) the job.

What are “soft skills”?

Soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ) and the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities.

A person's soft skill EQ is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. Screening or training for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications.

Examples of soft skills

- ⊙ Participate in a team
- ⊙ Lead a team
- ⊙ Unite a team amidst cultural differences
- ⊙ Teach others
- ⊙ Provide services
- ⊙ Negotiate
- ⊙ Motivate others
- ⊙ Make decisions
- ⊙ Solve problems
- ⊙ Observe forms of etiquette
- ⊙ Interact with others
- ⊙ Maintain meaningless conversation (small talk)
- ⊙ Maintain meaningful conversation (discussion/debate)
- ⊙ Defuse arguments with timing, instructions and polite, concise language
- ⊙ Feign interest and speak intelligently about any topic
- ⊙ Listening
- ⊙ Coaching

Soft skills are sometimes broken down into personal attributes, such as optimism, common sense, responsibility, a sense of humor, integrity, time-management, and motivation. Also included are interpersonal abilities such as empathy, leadership, communication, good manners, sociability, and the ability to teach.

It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get (and keep) the job.

itive attitude and the ability to work collaboratively with others sets you apart from the average employee. Being able to prioritize projects and multi-task demonstrates sound time management skills. Employers also seek employees who are resourceful and able to solve problems. If you find that you need to brush up on soft skills, the good news is that they can be learned and there are many professional development resources at your fingertips online.—Kim Heck, CEO, Sports Turf Managers Association

Editor's note: Here are some real-world examples of turf professionals' using soft skills to obtain better results at work.

ERIC ADKINS, Toyota Park, Chicago

One of the things I have learned over the years is how to get more out of my employees and other co-workers. I just don't bark out orders, I want this done or that that done, I ask if "you can do me a favor." It could be the worst job or task but I think it

makes everyone think like they are helping instead of working. The other thing that I think I have learned is that "It's just grass," no matter how things are going or what's going on in life at the end of the day. We do the best we can and tomorrow is another day. It's just grass.

JESSE PRITCHARD, CSFM, University of Virginia

I would call the weather situation [in mid-February] we are in here at the University of Virginia a crisis. As many of you have seen on the news or even experienced, the Mid-Atlantic region has received record amounts of snowfall this winter. We are fortunate to have four synthetic practice fields from which we have plowed nearly 5 feet of snow. While these fields are very nice for football and lacrosse, baseball and softball need to be played on dirt and grass.

It has been an interesting process explaining to both our head baseball and softball coaches that their opening games

are in serious jeopardy of being canceled due to the snow. Coaches have different personalities, and these two are no different. Our baseball coach is adamant about playing on the field to the point where it's nearly play at all costs. I understand this and have to steer him in the direction that will help him play as soon as possible and save the integrity of playing surface at the same time—this is usually a huge compromise on his part. Our softball coach wants to get on the field as early as possible but understands the investment athletics has made in her field and wants to do nothing to damage it. These are completely different approaches from our head coaches. I need to use thoughtful communication and pull from a background of trust that I have developed with my coaches to make them comfortable with how the field crew will make their fields playable. The relationships I have developed with our coaches go a long way in determining how green the grass appears and how true the ball bounces.

Best In Show

Celebration Bermudagrass is Rated #1

★ **For Drought Tolerance and Recovery**

★ **For Shade Tolerance**

★ **For Wear Tolerance**

... and

★ **Requires Less Nitrogen**

★ **Reduces Player Injury Due to Lower Surface Hardness**

Independent university research confirms what many golf course, sports turf and turfgrass professionals have been experiencing for the past several years—that Celebration has many practical advantages over other bermudagrass cultivars.



For more information, including where to buy, visit sodolutions.com/SportsTurf

JEAN TANSEY, Recreation and Parks, Baltimore County, MD

Soft skills are required to be used extensively in our agency's presentations at community meetings and public hearings on park development. While everyone likes the idea of parks, few people like them "in my backyard." Add to that a basic distrust of "government" and navigating through a public meeting can be tricky!

One meeting in particular comes to mind. A piece of property recently acquired by the County for a park was surrounded by single family residential homes. At the beginning of the meeting residents were angry, hostile and worried about what was going to be developed behind their homes. Worries about crime, rowdy behavior and traffic were all part of the concern.

Simply by setting a friendly tone, actively listening and validating residents' ideas and comments, and generating an attitude of calm, control and respect among the crowd, the attitude and demeanor of the meeting changed dramatically. By the end of the meeting 2 hours later, the audience actually applauded our efforts and supported the idea of developing a park that respected their ideas and desires. The park is now a much-used and appreciated part of the community.

Active listening, an air of openness and friendliness, and a collaborative, inclusive attitude go a long way to insuring any project is successful.

RICK PERRUZZI, CSFM, City of South Portland, ME

In years past I have been lucky enough to have hired and worked with some very talented people whom bring a wide range of skills to the workplace. Although I have the final say on what is to be done, I have allowed these individuals to express their opinions on many areas of maintaining sports fields and collectively we overcome issues that arise. In return the individuals feel a sense of pride and worth in obtaining our goal of producing and maintaining safe fields.

JODY GILL, CSFM, Blue Valley (KS) SD

When dealing with difficult people and/or situations, I tend to be very patient, understanding and optimistic. Recent examples include the bad winter weather. Sometimes people get very upset when they think we are not doing enough to eliminate ice or isolated slick areas and they fail to understand why salt will not melt ice when the temperatures are single digits and below. By being patient and just listening to them sometimes they will talk themselves out of the problem when they realize there are safer routes of travel to get to a building.

If you get confrontational with people, the situation will most certainly elevate into a bigger problem. This means that sometimes we must be able to tolerate some level of non-personal, verbal abuse. Just grin and bear it and let them vent.

I think there are countless times in our industry when this personality trait is very helpful. Best example is when a field does not look or play as well as a coach, player or (worst of all) a parent thinks it should and they want to make sure you know about it. You know there is a specific reason why the field may not be at its best, but that explanation will just sound like an excuse to the complainer. I think the best way to handle it is to listen intently, take nothing personally, thank them for providing input and feedback and assure them that you will work to improve the situation. People who are impatient, confrontational and lack a "thick skin" probably would not last long in our industry.

DEBBIE KNEESHAW, City of Portland, OR

I have been thinking of soft skills quite a bit because I depend on them immensely to obtain desired outcomes. I have always believed in positive personal connections/interactions equating in better outcomes. I tend to invest in each individual who assists me in my job, so that they "buy in" to my ownership and vision, and hopefully put more investment into their job so that they help achieve the same ownership, vision, and goal.

With my co-workers, I tend to offer choices on job duties for the day. I believe it helps empower them and gives them ownership to their choice. Inevitably all the work needs to be accomplished; it just works well if a choice is available to offer it. We also work very closely as a team, and I communicate the big picture, so that we are all on the same page of why we do job tasks in the manner and order that we do them.

That I use "please" and "thank you" is very important to me when



Courtesy of West Coast Turf

If you get confrontational with people, the situation will most certainly elevate into a bigger problem. This means that sometimes we must be able to tolerate some level of non-personal, verbal abuse. Just grin and bear it and let them vent.

I am addressing anyone. In job task notes that I write, I always make sure to write "Could you please..." and end with "Thank you." I also recognize a job well done and the strengths of each individual.

I also think that a happy disposition and an eagerness to perform my job well are infectious and tend to set the mood for the day. I do tend to get focused on the job tasks, and at times have to remind myself to slow down a bit, and to invest on a personal level.

It truly is the subtleties that make people respond more favorably.

**JIM CORNELIUS,
West Chester (PA)
School District**

In the midst of budget cuts, Mother Nature serves up a volley of unprecedented snow storms and each becomes the new record for the area. We have dealt with three so far and as I type we are expecting number four. Due to my lengthy years of service and experience I am calling the shots and I can proudly say we become stronger with each storm. I preach to the staff that we are the best and we need to always think positive. We teach the younger staff the new ways and the old ways, allowing them to experiment with what works for them and that has proven invaluable. As a leader I pass the torch to see who runs with it and when they have been trained the torch keeps burning and almost always makes it back. My staff comes in as individuals each day and by day's end they leave as a team.

In the midst of huge budget cuts, facilities and operations had to cut \$1 million from an \$8 million budget, and we did it without cutting staff. By communicating with all parties we asked the staff to present ideas on how to do this, and although we were never a fat organization, they came up with ideas that management would have never thought of. They reduced overtime hours by willingly changing their shifts to cover outside user groups, they encouraged the students and teaching staff to turn off lights when not needed, they gave up their uniform allowance, examined the grounds areas that did not need weekly mowing and presented a plan to incorporate wild flowers into these areas. When faced with the hardships of the



AerWay® Leaves Sports Fields Safe and Playable

AerWay® venting tines can be used all season long to reduce compaction and stimulate strong root development without taking the field out of play. The result is a resilient playing surface with excellent top growth.



for more information call **1-800-457-8310**

Advanced Aeration Systems

www.aerway.com email: aerway@aerway.com

Need Superior Rain Tarps and Turf Protection?



Full Field Tarps



Spot Tarps-with grommets or weighted edge



Mesh Infield Protector System

Customize with your logo!

FieldSaver® by CoverSports has you covered!

Special offers ONLY at www.CoverSports.com/ST

For price quotes, colors, sizes and fabric specs, visit www.CoverSports.com/ST

We make covers for all athletic surfaces: Windscreens
• End To Safe Stadium & Backstop Padding • Fence-top Protection



In Philadelphia Since 1874
sales@coversports.com • 800-445-6680

economy one needs to give their power to the people and the people will return the power with a higher level of respect.

Four years ago I began training the athletes in the middle schools and high schools on how to maintain their fields in a way to help out my grounds crew. Along with my grounds crew we taught the athletes how to rake infields, pitcher mounds and batter boxes, fill divots, use off-field areas for practices and goal drills and this has parlayed into something bigger than expected. The students bought into it and along came the coaches, soon enough the outside users were on board. We now have neighboring townships asking us to hold classes for their users as well. With the economy trying to recover we have groups willing to give us money for seed, fertilizers and topdressing. Learning to work with them vs. fighting with them has been a blessing and when you examine the little details you learn we always had the same dreams: provide good, safe fields for the users to enjoy. Yes we have limited the number of total events on every field, which has caused the outside users to look elsewhere; ironically few complain as long as they can get something. I guess the old saying a dollar today is worth more than a hundred dollars tomorrow is true since tomorrow never gets here.

MIKE TARANTINO, **Poway (CA) USD**

At one time or another we have all had to use what I'll call negotiation skills or soft skills; whether at home or on the job these traits become a handy tool to assist us in winning over a spouse, child, customer or contactor. While I'm not saying that these skills will solve all of your problems all of the time, you may find they help you solve problems a good majority of the time.

A particular problem comes to mind dealing with the recent budget problems; I found myself needing to justify my department's need for additional staff and money. I could have easily gone into that negotiation with the attitude I'm going to get what they give me and let's move on. However, that isn't the tactic I decided to use. Everyone in the meeting was tense but a simple friendly greeting of "hello and how are you" to the attendees let them know I wasn't here in a confrontational mode. While my superiors gave their accounts of what they thought I needed to do, I went into what I'll call understanding mode which I said I understand your point of view and then continued to make my case, the who, what, why and how we do to support the education of children and the community. While not all positions and dollars were saved, fewer positions were lost and we were budgeted for needed equipment.

Without the use of these soft skills in a time of desperate measures, I'm not sure the outcome would have been what I wanted.

KENNY NICHOLS, **Westerville (OH) City Schools**

I often use these "soft skills" by purchasing a good book that relates a point or conveys a message I wish to send, and giving it to a person I wish to influence. Then I wait. Once they have read it, doors are usually open to discussion on the subject. Of course,



Without the use of these soft skills in a time of desperate measures, I'm not sure the outcome would have been what I wanted.

I have either already read the book myself or am reading it in parallel with them.

Employing this in reverse: if a friend or co-worker mentions a good read they are into, I often pick up the same title and read it at the same time hoping to gain shared perspectives with them.

I have a friend who is fond of saying, "If you force a man against his will, he will remain of the same opinion still." Over the years, I have come to learn that coming along side someone to share thoughts and ideas is much more effective than coming at them head-on.

Think of the baseball coach trying to get the call changed by going nose-to-nose with the umpire vs. the father with one arm around his son's shoulder as he points the way and shares his vision. Which is more effective?

We just might see a few calls changed if a coach could bring themselves to put an arm around the ump and attempt to gain a shared perspective!

BRAD PARK, **Rutgers University**

Working with sports field managers, administrators (i.e. municipal and K-12 schools), engineers, and contractors to assist in solving sports field problems frequently requires finesse and a comprehensive set of soft skills.

Annually, I receive requests from engineers representing public facilities to make a site visit to a recently constructed sports field. During some conversations or visits, the engineer will explicitly state or imply that a contractor has failed to perform according to specifications. The engineer is often seeking documentation from an expert to support their point of view.

Conversely, I am also contacted by contractors requesting a site

visit to assess a construction project. These contacts are often seeking a report on University letterhead that states their work was completed according to specifications and concludes that problems with the project were a function of engineering flaws.

Enter soft skills.

In the vast majority of these requests, I ask the engineer or contractor to provide my contact information to the owner of the facility. As an employee of a public University I believe it is more constructive to visit the site/project on behalf of and in the presence of the "owner," who is ultimately responsible for the long-term management of the property.

Additionally, working with the owner and deciphering his or her intentions often requires soft skills. In some cases, the owner may be looking to assign blame to one or more parties. As an educator performing visits in an Extension capacity, my goal is assist the owner in *improving* the site rather than directing blame. Tactful report writing with a problem-solving focus is another important soft skill.

MARCUS DEAN, CSFM, University of Kentucky

I think a successful person must use good soft skills all the time. Soft skills are a valuable asset to no matter what profession you are in or what you are trying to achieve daily. When you are at work you must be able to have good clear communication with your co-workers (or coaches, family, administration, the public, everyone, etc). You must be able to speak the language of whom you are communicating with. I have learned to ask for a response from the person I am directly giving instructions to because I understand what I am asking but a lot of times the person taking the instructions doesn't see the same thing I do.

Something my mom has been telling me since I was a kid is, "It is not what you say but how you say it." I am still learning to master this skill and have had other mentors tell me the same thing. I wear my emotions on my sleeve and put too much emotion into my responses.

As I have grown professionally, I have

done a better job with this but at times I still have lapses. Another form of soft skills is being able to listen. Listening is more than just hearing the person talk; it is looking them in the eye when communicating. Soft skills are required at home, at work, and out in public. In my opinion, soft skills are communication, listening, body language, practicing good manners, being polite, etc. As I have matured personally and professionally my soft skills have gotten a lot better. I have to give a lot of credit to my parents and my mentors for what I have developed into as a person and as a professional.

PETER THIBEAULT, CSFM, Noble and Greenough School (MA)

Example of soft skills in action: The year leading up to our entry into the "Field of the Year" competition sticks out in my mind the most. After having been to the STMA National Conference and having seen first hand some of the winners, I knew it was going to take everyone's effort. The communication started before each event or activity and kept going throughout.

The field that we entered that year happens to host baseball, graduation, summer day camp, Jimmy Fund, and fall soccer. This meant I had a broad spectrum of background in the audience to work with. This at the same time also allowed me to strengthen relationships. It really was nice to see the satisfaction in each after their event or activity on how nice everything remained. So accidentally I had almost shared the excitement that I had. When we entered and had actually won it was very exciting for our community to receive that kind of achievement. This has helped my relationships within the community and it really is difficult to give one particular instance, because these skills are used seemingly all the time.

The effort of this particular time stood out the most for me because it showed to me that most of the users were just going at it as "business as usual," when presented with the opportunity to do things differently most were open to the opportunity. ■



Passion
for the game

Passion
for the dirt

It's more than dirt; it's the difference between game days and rain delays.

Grant's Engineered Soil Technology ensures that the quality we promise is the product we deliver.

Engineered Soil Products

- DuraEdge™ Infield Mixes
- FieldSaver™ Infield Amendment
- DuraPitch™ Premium Mound Clay

Not all dirt is created equal.

 **Natural Sand Company™**

1-866-867-0052
www.naturalsand.com

TRY “MINI-SOD” FOR BARE SPOTS

With low budgets for maintaining sports turf all the rage now, unfortunately, many readers may need to rely strictly on the resources you currently have on hand. That means sometimes re-sodding bare areas is not an option.

You can try overseeding but often with the use demands on your fields, the seed doesn't have much of a chance to survive to become a mature stand of grass. Even if there is an opportunity to re-sod some areas, you might have issues with matching the sod to the existing stand, or creating high or low spots.

Don Dunivan of Western Turf & Hardscapes in Reno, NV says there is one way to kill two birds with one shot. He suggests aerating both the bare spots on your field as well as areas that do have a good stand, then collecting the cores before they dry up. Dunivan says you then spread the freshly harvested plugs on the bare spots and use a roller to get them into the ground and ensure good contact with the soil. Then topdress with a good double-mix material and keep the areas wet as possible until the roots start to develop, just like new sod or seed. He recommends applying 15-15-15 or 6-20-20 fertilizer to help promote good rooting.

Dunivan says this can be done almost any time of the year if rainfall or water is available, since roots grow more during cooler months. Water as you would with new seed, he says; the plugs will root the same way as sod.

This method ensures that the “sod” matches the grass on the rest of your field and will save money and time. He says the method is effective for both cool and warm-season grasses. ■

Don Dunivan runs the Turf Management Services division for Western Turf in Reno, NV. He has been in the sod business since 1975. He can be reached at 775-771-7127.



A GUIDE to outsourcing grounds management services

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT is a delicate balance of managed timelines, limited resources and quality performance. The more a sport facility is used, the higher the expectations of the players, coaches, fans and financial supporters. Uncertain economic conditions, extreme weather or just plain bad luck challenge all of us. We adapt and survive by learning to do more with less.

Imagine this scenario; you are planning a renovation project. Traditionally, you have always done this kind of work in-house. This job is a little bit different. You must complete it quickly and while there is adequate funding, this is a high profile assignment. In order to complete the mission successfully (to specification, on-time, and on-budget), requires that you use specialized equipment (which you do not own). Purchasing new machinery is out of the question at this time. Renting or borrowing is not an option either. Besides that, you are under staffed, overtime pay is discouraged, and the routine work still has to get done. What to do!

Outsourcing certain grounds maintenance tasks to outside contractors is a tool that can give a manager an opportunity to save money, meet goals and provide timely service. Like many other

aspects of grounds management, this may not be for everyone; how and when you use it depends upon your specific circumstances.

The traditional in-house grounds department business model allows a grounds manager maximum flexibility and control. Tactical decisions such as when to mow or irrigate can be made quickly. Most in-house groundskeeping departments perform the basic grounds maintenance functions at their sites. The more sophisticated grounds operations are often capable of specialties such as arboriculture, fine horticulture, pesticide and nutrient application, earthworks and hardscaping to name a few. But over time, circumstances change and savvy grounds managers periodically review their strategic plans to eliminate problems, save money or improve results. Some grounds managers look beyond their organizations for solutions.

WHAT ARE ADVANTAGES?

What advantages are there to outsourcing? You can continue to focus on work you do best (your brand). Many managers find that it simplifies operations because it reduces the investment in dedicated equipment, talent or technology for projects that are not part of their routine. You share risk by collaborating with a specialized company thus,

If you **know your costs** and have **good specifications** you will be able to make informed decisions whether outsourcing will work for you or not.



Don Savard, CSFM, CGM

helping to ensure the best results. For example, many grounds managers frequently contract out tree work or fertilizer and pesticide applications because the service provider possesses specific equipment, knowledge, licenses and experience. In addition, the contractor can save their client time by sourcing materials and because of their greater buying power, often they can pass along a cost savings.

Sounds great, doesn't it? But beware; there are some disadvantages you need to think about. First, you could become preoccupied with the contract administration, causing you to neglect other responsibilities. Second, your contractor could become distracted with other projects, resulting in poor service for you. Third, some managers have reported that their service provider changed their key personnel, were sold or went out of business in mid-project. Perhaps the biggest risk of all is the effect outsourcing will have on your valued staff. Think about how your team will feel if you contract out the work that your people enjoy and take pride in. Overcoming resentment and rebuilding trust takes a long time, and may never be completely restored.

Many operations outsource grounds maintenance services as a way to save money. To find out if outsourcing would be cost effective for your organization, you must conduct a thorough cost analysis. Examine all of the costs involved of performing the work in-house. This would include equipment costs (purchase, depreciation, interest, repairs, taxes and insurance), direct costs (fuel, transportation, storage, licensing and permits, costs of labor) and indirect costs (training, overhead, benefits etc). Add to this opportunity cost (the cost of performing a task compared to doing other tasks of greater or lesser importance). Compare these with the costs of the contract (be sure that your metrics are the same as the contractor's). By doing your homework, it will be clear whether or not it is cheaper to do the work in-house versus contracting the work out.

FINDING QUALITY

The best way to find qualified contractors is by networking with people in your local STMA chapter, state turfgrass, nursery or landscape associations. Don't rule out service organizations and even the local Chamber of Commerce as contact sources for capable and professional service providers. If you are required to seek competitive bids, be sure that your bid documents clearly specify what contractor qualifications you require. Referrals from the owners sometimes can be helpful, but be careful. Their relationship (family, friend or benefactor) with the owner could jeopardize your position if there are conflicts.

We've all heard tales of road builders constructing sports fields that fail. Instead, seek out experienced contractors who specialize in the type of work you are trying accomplish. Do they have the right equipment in good working order, a stable and experienced workforce, appropriate licenses, insurance and a business philosophy similar to your own? Check references and visit sites where they have completed work.

The best way to begin the outsourcing relationship is by being well prepared. You will be in the strongest position if you know what you are doing. Provide clear, correct, concise, complete and consistent specifica-

tions. During contract negotiations, substitutions might be proposed. Know what you can and cannot accept. Use written contracts and change orders because they protect both parties. Once the contract begins, communicate directly with a designated contact per-

tool. If you know your costs and have good specifications you will be able to make informed decisions whether outsourcing will work for you or not. Above all, always surround yourself with good people, treat them well and communicate effectively. ■

Outsourcing is a tool that can give a manager an opportunity to save money, meet goals and provide timely service.

son and avoid the temptation to micromanage. Most importantly, remember that prompt payments and being reasonable can move mountains for you.

The take-home message here is that outsourcing grounds maintenance services is a

Don Savard, CSFM, CGM is the Athletic Facilities and Grounds Manager for the Salesianum School in Wilmington, DE and is the President of the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey.

	Z-SPRAY	Competitor A	Competitor B
True Zero Turn Maneuverability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
By-Pass Agitation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
All Stainless Steel Chassis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
220 LB Hopper Capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Optional Auxiliary Tank	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50' Hose Reel for Spot Spraying	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
G.P.S. Speedometer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 m.p.h Transport Speed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Section Independent Boom	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hydraulic Drive Hopper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3' to 25' Variable Spread Width	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.0 GPM Pump	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Standard 18 Gallon Spray Capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Up to 1 Gallon per 1000 capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air Injection Low Drift Nozzles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16" Front Tires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20" Rear Tires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 HP Electric Start Engine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locking Caster System	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Gallon Gas Tank	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional features for Z-Spray: **Z-Max & Intermediate**, **50 on Z-Max**, **not applicable** (for Competitor A), **not applicable** (for Competitor B).

L.T. Rich Products
 Call us at: (877) 482-2040
 or visit us at: www.zspray.com

Why choose anything else?

Field of the Year winner attests to sun's dangers

WORK FOR A SMALL UNIVERSITY in Central Florida where I have been employed for almost 10 years. Some of you may have heard of Stetson University in DeLand; we have won the STMA College Softball Field of the Year for the past 2 years. I am the Field Maintenance Tech/Turf manager for the field. Before working at the complex, I was the grounds coordinator for the entire 180-acre campus. Over the past 41 years of work, including 25 years with the fire department, I have owned both a foliage nursery and a lawn care business. I grew up in Florida, played sports and spent many hours outdoors.

This magazine asked me what the most important piece of clothing is that I put on

before going to work each day. Just as we don personal protection equipment (PPE) such as masks, protective suits, rubber gloves, and breathing protection before we apply herbicides and other pesticides and safety glasses, ear plugs and gloves before operating some of our equipment, those of us who work outside must also protect ourselves from the sun.

Experts recommend hats with 2-3 inch brims or larger; those with UV protection are even a more effective option. Dermatologists and the American Cancer Society suggest that ball caps do not offer enough protection since the tops of the ears, nose, and neck are highly susceptible to the sun.

There are many types of clothing on the market today including both pants and

shirts that offer some type of ultraviolet B rays (UVB) protection rating from 15 to 50 (UPF) ultraviolet protection factor. The higher the number is, the greater the protection. Darker colors offer more protection than lighter colors. Many larger department stores offer this line of clothing, as well as some of the large sporting goods stores and retailers of outdoor clothing. Protective gear of this type can be expensive, but it wears well, and certainly helps to protect us.

Look for sunglasses that give both UVA and UVB protection from 99-100%.

Sunglasses are a very important part of our attire since we spend most of our time outdoors in daylight hours. Look for sunglasses that give both UVA and UVB protection from 99-100%. Sunglasses should have a listing of UV400 (400nm is the wavelength of UVA radiation.) All sunglasses block UVB radiation. Excessive exposure to the sun's rays unprotected can cause cataracts later in life. If you are blue-eyed like I am, your eyes will be even more light sensitive. Regardless of whether or not the sun is often visible where you live UV rays are still there. UV rays at their peak are found in high altitudes, snow-covered landscapes, or bodies of water.

I know that some of you are reading this wondering, what is the most important piece of clothing I wear to work? While all the items mentioned above are very important, the thing I put on that is most important to me is not clothing but SUN-SCREEN. The UV rays given off from the sun can be beneficial by giving us vitamin D which helps strengthen bone, and teeth, and aids in the prevention of Ricketts and colon cancer.

Unfortunately, the rays are invisible and we can easily absorb too many, too fast. Sunscreen with a minimum rating of SPF 15 is recommended by the American Cancer Society. Sunscreen can fight the early signs of skin cancer, and yes ladies, help prevent wrinkles from too much sun exposure. You are 12 times more likely to develop solar keratoses (SKs) skin damage when not using sunscreen. The peak hours of the sun which are from 10am-2pm are 10 times more damaging than any other time of the day.



Sun illustration courtesy of istockphoto.com

A rule of thumb is that if your shadow is longer than you, UV exposure is low, or if your shadow is shorter than you, UV exposure is high. I know that in our line of work we can not change the hours we're exposed to the peak time of UV rays, but we can change the protection we use.

I remember as a young person camping on the beach with the Boy Scouts. We had a beautiful full moon that night, with the most beautiful blue sky you have ever seen the next day. We fished and swam all day and had a great time not to mention the fish we caught and ate right there on the beach. I also remember the terrible sunburn I had, the trouble standing up because of the pain in my legs, not being able to wear clothes, and the pain while my mother rubbed me down with lotion for days. That was not the only sunburn I've had, or the problems sun exposure has given me since.

The dermatologists and cancer societies report that most of our sun damage occurs before our 18th birthday. It just happens to show up later in life and the older we get, the more problems we have. However this is not true in all cases, as melanoma cases are on the rise in young people.

I tell you this from experience; I have used topical creams to burn off sun damage on my arms. I have had basal cell cancer cut off my face, and had cancer frozen from my arms, shoulder, and legs. I have had squamous cell cancer removed from my nose by Moh's surgery and the skin grafted from my ear to my nose. (I can hear my food

now, ha, ha). Trust me, you do not want those 18 injections in your nose required by that procedure. I tell you this because of the melanoma I had removed from my temple this year and the 3 1/2-inch scar reminding me each day to put on the sunscreen. I tell you these things because it matters.

There are three types of skin cancer, all that I have mentioned. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) statistics from 2005 show that 54,000 people had melanoma cancer, and 8,345 people died from it that year. The largest population was Caucasian, but Hispanics, blacks, and Asians were also affected. They also say 1 in 5 people will develop skin cancer sometime during their life. Some newer statistics say 9,000 died from melanoma in 2009. As supervisors, employers, directors and foreman we should use sunscreen and preach to our employees about the importance of using it. Sunscreen comes in many forms such as lotions, creams, wipes, and sprays. Maybe sunscreen should be provided by management much as ear plugs, eye protection, and gloves are. At Stetson we use a wall mounted 2 liter refillable dispenser that I could tell you more about. Do yourself a favor, slap on the lotion and cover up with proper clothing. It may be expensive at first, but so is a plastic surgeon. ■

Please forward comments and questions to gmarshal@stetson.edu I would love to hear from you.

See more from George Marshall of Stetson University on page 38.