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# SportsField

## MANAGEMENT

October 2021

Vol. 37 No. 10

The Official Publication of the Sports Turf Managers Association

What is Clay? **10** | Maintaining the Trees and Shrubs at Sports Fields and Facilities **14**  
Professional Branding **26** | The SFM Interview **30**

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# Editor's Note



**John Kmitta**

Associate Publisher /  
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In last month's President's Message, STMA President Nick McKenna, CSFM, shared his firsthand experience from the Field of Dreams, which took place just prior to our September issue deadline. But due to the nature of our deadlines, our in-depth Field of Dreams post-event recap takes center stage in this issue of *SportsField Management*, and features my exclusive interview with Murray Cook, president of BrightView Sports Turf, which built and managed the field.

In this month's cover story, Cook shares his insight into what it took to make the Field of Dreams a reality.

Personally, I don't think anyone involved with the project could have asked for a better outcome, or a better game, than what was delivered on August 12. There are not many regular-season sporting events that can elicit the level of anticipation and emotion I felt watching the build-up to the Field of Dreams game, or the game itself for that matter.

I first set foot on the Field of Dreams movie site field more than 20 years ago when my wife and I (as a newly engaged couple at the time) took a trip to Dyersville, Iowa, and spent a sunny summer morning enjoying the

setting and playing catch in the outfield. There is something special about that place, and that experience made watching this year's Field of Dreams game with her even more special. (As a kid from the Chicago area, who spent plenty of time in the stands at Comiskey Park, the walk-off win for the White Sox was a nice bonus.)

As Cook said during my interview with him, people have a strong connection to the Field of Dreams movie. Nearly 6 million people tuning in live for a week-night regular season baseball game proves that point.

This was a rare occasion in that the conversation and attention surrounding the event (pre-game, in-game and post-game) was focused on the field itself, and the magical, emotional backdrop that was created for this game. I hope that what was created in that Iowa cornfield shows people (especially the younger generation) the skill, artistry and professionalism of sports field managers – and what this industry's professionals can achieve. And I hope you enjoy our coverage of the Field of Dreams. **SFM**

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# President's Message

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Howdy STMA members! October is here, and for most of us that means we are now in the prime of the fall sports season, and hopefully a little fall weather! As part of my own growth process, I am continually thinking about topics and processes that can help me improve both personally and professionally. As such, I've been reflecting a lot on the topic of leadership lately.

What is leadership? This question could be asked of 1,000 people and you'd probably end up with 1,000 different answers. By definition, leadership is "the power or ability to lead other people" (Merriam-Webster); but for me it is more personal and goes deeper than that. For most of my life, I have been a lead-by-example type of person, and while that is still my natural tendency, my leadership style has had to evolve. Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work with leaders ranging from very good to very bad, and everywhere in between. Each of them had characteristics that I liked and disliked, and some were more effective than others. I've tried to draw off those experiences, take what I like, and then find a way to utilize it myself. That doesn't mean it's the same, but that I've used it to guide me as I've developed my own leadership tendencies.

I think one of the biggest misperceptions about leadership is



**Nick McKenna, CSFM**

STMA President

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that you have to be in a position of authority in order to lead. I have never been one to be defined by my position/title; and, as such, have never let that dictate my role within any group. In my mind, the single most important role of leadership is to bring out the best of everyone else around you. Whether that is a coworker, an athlete, a superior, or significant other; when we are helping others grow and reach their maximum potential, we strengthen the world around us.

General Douglas MacArthur summarized leadership very well when he stated, "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent"

Leadership isn't always easy or fun, but we all have that strength, and we all have that ability, so let your actions and intent attest to that, and let's change the world together! **SFM**

Nick McKenna, CSFM



## STMA is Developing an Apprenticeship Program

The STMA Certification Committee has a new Apprenticeship Program under development. This program is intended to build on the Sports Field Management 101 online certificate course, which is currently offered by STMA. The goal of the Apprenticeship Program is to create an on-the-job learning program that combines hands-on experience with mentorship and leadership. At the conclusion of this 480-hour program, students will be well prepared for employment in the sports field management industry. Some current internship programs at sports facilities could qualify toward a portion of the 480-hour minimum requirement.

Apprenticeship came to America from England, where it was created in 1563 and was considered the first step on the road to economic independence. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) states that 94% of apprentices who complete an apprenticeship program in other industries retain employment, with an average annual salary of \$70,000. The DOL registers these programs and reports that there were nearly 26,000 apprenticeship programs active across the nation in 2020.

Although the STMA program is still in development, the learning modules have been identified. Apprentices will receive training based on a checklist of skills. Some of the skills include fertilizer spreader calibration, identification of turfgrasses, weeds, insects and diseases, safe equipment operation, field layout, painting techniques and general maintenance practices for healthy, safe fields.

Program participants, no matter their age or employment status, will qualify for STMA student membership, which is \$30 annually.

The STMA Board of Directors has discussed the labor shortages in the industry, and approved the development of the Sports Field Management 101 course and the Apprenticeship Program to help with those shortages. There is also recognition that not all students can afford to pursue a college degree. These two programs create an alternate career path into the profession.

The Apprenticeship Program is planned to be introduced at the 2022 STMA national conference, Jan. 17-20, in Savannah, Ga.

## Start Preparing for the STMA Student Challenge

The STMA Student Challenge is presented in partnership with the SAFE Foundation, founding partner Hunter Industries, and supporting sponsor Ewing. Each year students from 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities across the country compete in an exam that challenges knowledge in the sports field industry. The winning teams receive a cash award, a plaque, and medallions for each team member. The prize money benefits the institution's turfgrass program and creates opportunities for students pursuing a career in sports field management. The Study Guide for the 2022 STMA Student Collegiate Challenge is now available online. Be sure to thoroughly review the Study Guide in preparation for the exam.

The 2022 contest will take place January 19 from 2-4:30 p.m. at the Savannah Convention Center in Savannah, Ga. Registration for the Student Challenge opens on October 15. A maximum of four undergraduates can compete on a team and must declare if they are representing a two-year or four-year institution. Competitors receive complimentary conference registration. You must be an STMA member to participate. All Student Challenge competitors are required to register online before December 15. No paper registration forms will be accepted. Contact Kristen Althouse at [kalthouse@stma.org](mailto:kalthouse@stma.org) with questions about the Student Challenge.

## Take Advantage of CEUs at STMA Conference

Increase your professionalism by taking advantage of the continuing education units (CEUs) being offered at the STMA Conference this year. Earn up to 1.5 CEUs through STMA. STMA is seeking approval from the following professional organizations to provide CEUs for attending education sessions at the conference:

- American Sports Builders Association (ASBA)
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
- Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)



- Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS)
  - National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP)
- Pesticide Recertification Credits have been approved by Georgia.\**

\*Pesticide Recertification credits will only be available for Georgia. If you are attending from another state and are in need of pesticide recertification credits, you are responsible for contacting your state's Department of Agriculture for approval.

A detailed listing of education sessions that qualify for CEUs and recertification credits will be provided online. Be sure to sign in using the appropriate form during the education sessions to receive credit.

## Free STMA Conference Registration Program in Place for This Year

STMA is again offering a free conference registration with any new membership, which is defined as not

being a member during the previous five years.

Encourage your crew and chapter members to take advantage of this valuable offer so that they can receive complimentary registration to the Jan. 17-20, 2022, national conference planned for Savannah, Ga.

Those seeking this benefit need to sign up at [STMA.org](https://STMA.org) by creating a profile and then selecting the First Time New Member option for membership.

STMA also has a program for current members to defray the cost of conference, membership or other expenditures such as certification renewal fees. Refer a member (be sure to have them list you as the "referral") and STMA will award \$100 to you for each member referred. The referral bonus can be used for any STMA program or service, except merchandise purchases.

STMA's conference registration link will open Oct. 15 with an all-new enhanced process. Registrations will only be accepted through this online process. The streamlined process will ask for limited information, and admins will now be able to easily register more than one person from a facility. Pricing will remain the same as the 2020 costs. **SFM**

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# What is Clay?

By Evan C. Mascitti

Clay appears so simple. It's dirt, dust and mud. It is the Earth itself. What could be more ordinary?

If we look closer, clay becomes complex and fascinating. Why does it form hardpan when dry but a soupy mess when wet? What makes some clays act so differently from others? To answer these, we first must wrestle with another riddle: what exactly is clay?

Faced with this question, many would offer something like the famous utterance by Justice Potter Stewart:

"I can't define it, but I know it when I see it."

This way of thinking about clay is perfectly suitable for practical, day-to-day workings with soil. For a more penetrating analysis, we must do a bit better.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

How you define clay depends on who you are. Here is a long-winded, official statement maintained by the Clay Minerals Society:

"The term 'clay' refers to a naturally occurring material composed primarily of fine-grained minerals, which is generally plastic at appropriate water contents and will harden when dried or fired. Although clay usually contains phyllosilicates, it may contain other materials that impart plasticity and harden when dried

or fired. Associated phases in clay may include materials that do not impart plasticity and organic matter." (Guggenheim and Martin, 1995)

This is quite a mouthful, and it characterizes the banter typical among academic scientists. This kind of debate is hardly unique to soils. Biologists often have trouble defining life, and some astronomers disagree on what constitutes a planet. Detailed definitions could seem like useless squabbling, but there is a good reason for it: our human desire to put things into categories doesn't always jive with nature's complexity. We have to draw lines somewhere, and definitions ensure everyone is on the same page.

The long passage above captures three ways to think about the word "clay:" as a particle size, as a mineral, or as a behavior. Each is useful in its own way.

## CLAY AS A PARTICLE SIZE

Particle size is probably the most familiar definition of clay. Clay-size particles are 2 microns (0.002 mm) and smaller. Even this is not clear-cut – what is "size?" Does it mean height? Width? Volume? For example, which has the greater size: a Frisbee or an apple? The Frisbee is wider, but the apple is taller. Actually, I would

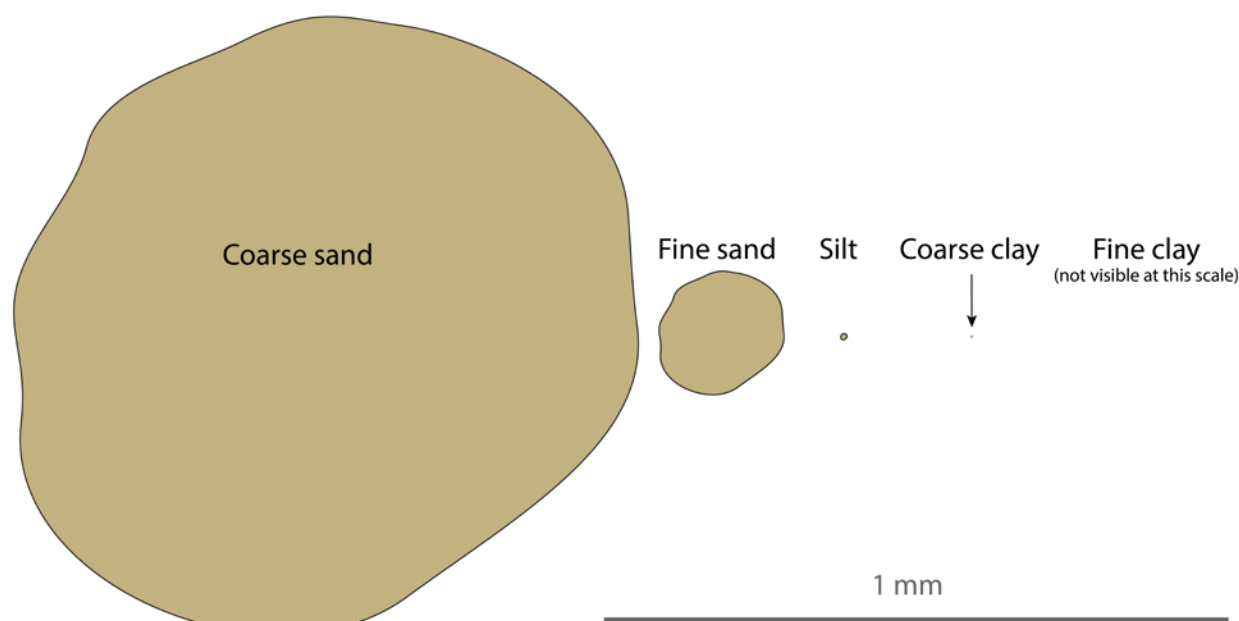


Figure 1: Clay particles are much, much smaller than sand grains.



argue that they are about the same size because their volumes are nearly equal. Only a perfect sphere can be described by a single “size” because all its dimensions are identical. Clay particles tend to be flat and wide (for reasons discussed below), so the “size” of a clay particle depends on how it is measured. To standardize the definition of size, soil scientists measure the settling of particles in a column of water. We assume the particles are spherical (even though they aren’t) and calculate their settling rates based on a mathematical principle called Stokes’ Law. Clay-size particles sink at the same rate as a sphere having a diameter of 2 microns. This is called the “equivalent spherical diameter,” or ESD.

Clay particles are not just a little smaller than sand or silt. They are so much smaller that it is almost impossible to grasp. It takes serious mental effort visualize their size – even if you are a soil scientist who thinks about this every day. Figure 1 shows a scaled representation of some soil particles. The “coarse” clay is barely visible, and the “fine” clay (<0.2 microns ESD) cannot be drawn at this scale. The differences are magnified even further by comparing volume, which is the truest definition of “size.” By volume, a fine clay particle is 1 trillion times smaller than a sand grain. The word “trillion” is used casually these days by politicians and journalists, but I try hard to remember that one trillion is not just more than one billion, it is a thousand billion – a number that feels impossibly large.

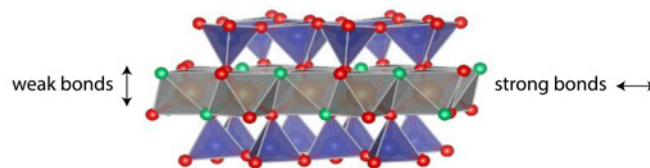
## CLAY AS A MINERAL

Soil particles are minerals. Minerals are made of atoms. This is the key to understanding the different types of clay.

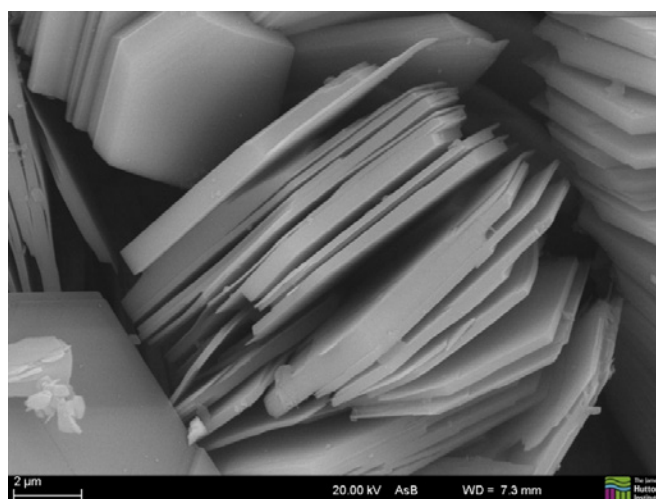
Clay minerals are officially named phyllosilicates. Phyllo is a Greek root meaning “sheet-like,” and silicate refers to the element silicon. Clay minerals are sheet-like because their atomic bonds are stronger in the two horizontal directions than in the vertical direction (Figure 2). The particles tend to grow in the x and y directions and separate more easily in the z-dimension. Most clay mineral particles have an aspect ratio of at least 40:1, with some well over 100:1 (Dixon and Weed 1989). Figure 3 shows some platy kaolinite particles under an electron microscope.

The atomic arrangement also determines how a clay interacts with water. Some clay minerals have a net negative charge at their surfaces. These charged surfaces attract water molecules. High-charge clays like vermiculite and smectite hold water very tightly. Illite also has a high charge, but it has less surface area, so its overall affinity for water is intermediate. Kaolinite has no permanent charge.

Clay minerals usually occur as very small crystals, so



**Figure 2:** Clay minerals are strongly bonded in the x and y dimensions and weakly in the z-dimension, leading to their platy shape. Adapted from Wang et al. (2020).



**Figure 3:** Kaolinite particles agglomerated into stacks. Image reproduced from the “Images of Clay Archive” of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland and The Clay Minerals Society (<https://www.minersoc.org/images-of-clay.html>)

the particle size and mineralogy definitions are easy to conflate. Soil scientists adopted the 2-micron silt/clay boundary in the 1930s because it is the smallest size, on average, at which non-clay minerals occur. There are still plenty of clay mineral particles larger than 2 microns, and plenty of non-clay minerals smaller than 2 microns. Before 1938, the clay size boundary was variously defined as 1, 5 or 15 microns (Simonson 1999). Therefore, the 2-micron cutoff is not as black and white as it is often considered.

## CLAY AS A BEHAVIOR

I believe thinking of clay as a behavior is the most useful definition for sports field managers. This definition is based on plasticity. Plasticity is the soil’s ability to be molded into a new shape. Plasticity is what allows potters to shape clay to their liking, and it is what allows a sports field manager to scratch and pack a pitcher’s mound.

In the behavioral definition of clay, particle size



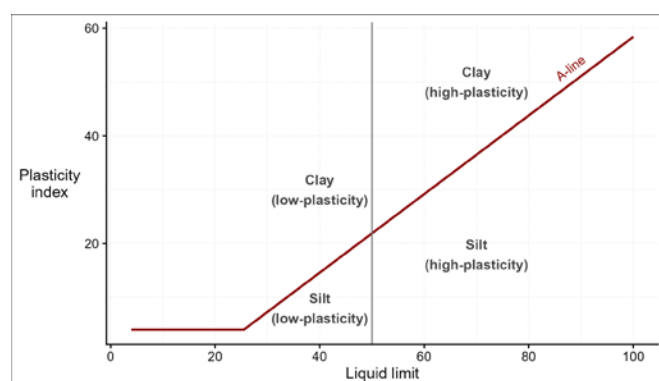


**Figure 4:** A. Soil above the plastic limit can be rolled into threads. B. The thread crumbles as it dries below the plastic limit. C. Soil paste flows at the liquid limit.

and mineralogy are ignored. They are the true drivers of soil behavior, but this information is not really needed to decide whether a soil “acts” more like a silt or a clay. Civil engineers use lab tests to quantitatively distinguish “clay-like” behavior from “silt-like” behavior. These tests measure the soil’s response when water is added or subtracted. There are two critical water contents: the plastic limit and the liquid limit. Figure 4 shows a sample at these thresholds.

At the plastic limit, the soil is just moist enough to be molded into a new shape. At the liquid limit, it begins to flow as a paste. The difference between the two is the plasticity index: it is the range of water contents over which the soil can be shaped and molded. Clays generally accept more water before becoming liquefied. Therefore, they have larger plasticity indices than silts.

Figure 5 shows a plasticity chart. A given soil is considered clay if it plots above the A-line. It is classified as a silt if it plots below the A-line. Both clays and silts can be further described as having high or low plasticity. The position of a soil on this chart helps predict its physical properties such as drainage and stiffness. The “clayey-ness” of a soil increases from lower left to upper right.



**Figure 5:** Plasticity chart used to distinguish silts from clays. Soils become more “clay-like” from left to right and from bottom to top.

Prof. Arthur Casagrande developed this system during World War II. In 1942 the United States was desperate to build air bases in the Pacific isles. Casagrande’s system helped military engineers ensure the soil below their runways would support heavy bombers during takeoff and landing. The tests required little equipment, which meant they could be performed in makeshift laboratories right on the island. More importantly, the tests directly recorded how the soil behaved when it got wet.

Soils that behave as clays are excellent for skin areas, but they are not conducive to growing healthy grass. Clays impede drainage and root respiration when compacted. When dry, their high strength prevents roots from penetrating. Clays retain more moisture than silts, but much of the water is held too tightly for plants to use.

### WHAT IS CLAY? THERE IS NO SINGLE ANSWER.

There are three ways to think about clay: as a particle size, as a family of minerals, and as a behavior. The first two are most useful to scientists, and the latter might better relate to sports surface performance. All three are important because the particle size and mineralogy are what ultimately dictate the soil behavior we observe and depend on.

Thinking on the micro scale is hard, but worthwhile. The performance of clay goes all the way back to atoms. That idea is both useful and fun! **SFM**

*Evan C. Mascitti is a Ph.D. candidate in soil science at Penn State University. He previously worked for several years as a grounds manager in professional baseball.*



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# SportsField

MANAGEMENT



# Maintaining the Trees and Shrubs at Sports Fields and Facilities

By John C. Fech

Trees and shrubs have been placed at your sports field for several reasons. They bring a lot of value in terms of amenity and shade to a sports facility, but if neglected can turn from an asset into an eyesore. Here's how to keep them looking and functioning great.

## Inventory

Before attempting to maintain anything – a car, a shopping mall, an air conditioning unit, a church building – it's crucial to identify the exact specifics at hand. After all, Ford parts just don't work well for a Dodge pickup. In this application, knowing that Ficus, viburnum, juniper and maple are the plants in the planting beds that need to be maintained establishes the foundation for any actions going forward. Each of these plants has unique needs that must be met in order for it to thrive; if those needs aren't met, the plant will struggle and become a drag on the facility.

An inventory can be a simple procedure. Starting with a simple sketch of a field or group of fields, simply draw in the hardscape features (such as the parking lots and concession stands), then the actual fields, then

the plantings. At this point, it's best to draw ovals, circles, rectangles and other geometric shapes instead of getting real detailed. An overall view document of this type is called a bubble diagram – one that establishes the size and shape of the sports field landscape.

After the bubbles have been located, take each one and draw it again, at least large enough to fill an entire page of graph paper or legal paper. This will provide the space necessary to be specific regarding the identity of each plant and its needs. Next, draw the smallest and lowest-to-the-ground plants, usually the short shrubs and hedges. Then draw in any trees that cast shade over the top of them with a rough wavy circular line, using a different color. If you know the names of the plants, great; go ahead and write them in at this point. If not, seek out their identity. Nursery vendors, experienced landscapers and university extension faculty are great resources for this, as are some of the smart phone apps that utilize recognition software. Label each plant or plant grouping with a corresponding letter, such as Group A = mass of Ficus, Group B = 2 hackberry, Group C = 7 lilacs, etc.



*Trees used for screening may cast excessive shade on sports turf.*





The right or left hand side of the enlarged bubble is a good location for each group and its associated needs. For example, Group C, the lilacs, would be headed with “7 Miss Kim Lilacs,” susceptible to oyster shell scale, scout for that in May; prune out the oldest stems after blooming; don’t need much in the way of fertilizer. Group A would be described as “Weeping Fig,” inspect for mealybugs throughout the season; fertilize lightly every two months; keep roots moist, not soggy or dry with drip system. The expected benefits for each planting – such as shade for the bleachers or screening between fields – should be noted as well.

### Assessment

After each field is inventoried, the plantings need to be assessed as well. This essentially involves making a determination of their condition in terms of pest presence, need for pruning/rejuvenation, and stability. This is especially true in terms of moderate to large trees; when neglected for even a short period of time, they can develop defects such as cracks, co-dominant leaders and poorly attached limbs. If assistance is needed to obtain this information,

an ISA Certified Arborist can provide his or her expertise. In addition to overall condition, a Certified Arborist can recommend currently approved arboricultural practices that can stabilize a tree and make it safe for spectators to sit beneath (nobody wants a limb falling on a soccer club booster).

The Certified Arborist can also identify and evaluate the significance of any poor practices that have been conducted in the past. Ill-advised tree care practices – such as lion’s tailing, topping, flush cutting and long-term cabling/bracing – usually have long-lasting effects on a tree’s health, and increase the odds of tree failure and harm to people nearby. If the arborist recommends pruning, fertilization, pest control or removal, it’s wise to take their advice. ISA Certified Arborists, particularly those with Tree Risk Assessment Qualifications (TRAQ) can be a real asset in the overall management of a sports complex, and can greatly reduce liability from poorly maintained trees.

In addition to the individual trees and shrubs themselves, time and effort should be given to assessing the site as well. Factors such as soil drainage, slope, fertility, sunlight exposure, irrigation system efficiency and soil pH



are very influential in the overall success of the plantings. At a minimum, these factors should be taken into consideration when specimens are failing. The better approach would be to take a proactive stance and consider each of the specific needs of the plants and match them with the site conditions, noting where discrepancies exist.

### The turf is king

Let's face it; in the overall sense, we're talking about the care and function of sports fields. As such, turfgrass health, vigor and performance must always be the most important factor and focus of attention by a sports field manager. Yes, in many situations, trees, shrubs and other plants are a part of the overall landscape, but keeping the turf as the number one element provides a valuable perspective and is instructive when it comes to the maintenance of ornamentals.

Many examples of turfgrass vs. trees/shrubs can and should be considered. Perhaps the most obvious is the shade produced by trees. If a tree casts a heavy shade on a field, it's depriving the field of an essential input. Both quality (the intensity) and quantity (number of hours received) of sunlight are influential. Other considerations include the time of day and direction that shade is cast. A tree on the south side of the field will provide a greater reduction in the amount and intensity of light received by the turfgrass than one on the east side.

The tree itself, in terms of the canopy density and actual shade pattern is a consideration as well. Oaks and maples produce much denser shade than honeylocust and eucalyptus. Shorter trees – such as Japanese tree lilac, crabapple and hawthorn – may provide visual relief and screening with minimal shading effects on the turf.

Turfgrass functions themselves are impacted by the



*A great candidate for regular condition assessment.*

presence of trees. Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass all differ in terms of their need for sunlight. When turfgrass experiences shade stress, the cell walls become thinner and the leaf blades elongate. This leads to a downward spiral in many cases, with higher than optimal humidity; reduced root growth in favor of shoot production; and a greater susceptibility to diseases such as stem rust, powdery mildew, brown patch, leaf spots and pink snow mold. Regular disease scouting is recommended under these circumstances.

A more subtle, but equally important, consideration is the competition for moisture and nutrients. When placed closely to the sports field, trees often cast excessive shade, but also develop roots that extend into the turfgrass area. Of course, each tree species (as well as individual specimens



*Combined with hardscape structures, trees can provide much needed shade.*



*Again, note the percentage of tree roots covered by asphalt or concrete.*



## JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ

### CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS SPORTS FIELD PROBLEM?

**PROBLEM:**

Wet areas on infield

**AREA:**

Clay infield of high school softball field

**LOCATION:**

Freeport, Maine

*Answer on page 33*

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*



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*Another great candidate for regular condition assessment.*



*An ISA Certified Arborist can help identify poor previous arboricultural practices such as lion's tailing.*

in a given species) is different in this regard, but a good rule of thumb is that the lateral expanse of roots is equal to the height of the tree.

Fortunately, sports field managers have a wide variety of tools available to them to deal with these issues – including light meters, apps, soil moisture probes and even consultants that specialize in the tree vs. turf quandary. The bottom line when it comes to this crossroads of turf and tree management is twofold:

1. Be careful trees and shrubs don't cast too much shade.
2. Monitor for the development of roots that compete excessively with turf for water and nutrients.

### **Scheduled maintenance**

When it comes to creating a schedule for maintenance, it should be done with the inventory and condition assessments in hand. As noted, certain species, such as pin oaks, are inherently susceptible to scale insects, but certainly not each and every year. This establishes a need for regular scouting and treatments based on the presence of pests at an actionable level. Yes, the knowledge that a certain disease or insect is likely to become infested or infected is really helpful in terms of knowing what to look for, but it's the actual presence that helps pull the trigger in terms of pesticide application. Also, keeping good records of treatments is really helpful for future management, because, in most cases, common pests of trees and shrubs usually take two to three years to control. Scheduling those applications in years 1, 2 and 3 increases the chances of success.

Pruning need is also a practice that should be coordinated with the inventory and analysis. Noting issues to be addressed utilizing recommendations from an ISA Certified Arborist (pruning, fertilization, growth regulator usage, expansion of mulched areas) on a weekly or monthly basis keeps tree and shrub maintenance on track throughout the season. For example, when scouting for pests, a technician should also notice if the mulch around a tree/shrub has blown away and needs to be replaced. Probing the soil for moisture level is a



*An ISA Certified Arborist can identify structural defects such as girdling roots.*



similar activity that should be done on a regular basis. Simple tools such as a headless golf club, screwdriver or piece of rebar are essential for determining soil moisture content for both trees and turf.

Especially if the sports facility is large, there will be several trees each year that need to be removed – both for the benefit of the turf and the reduced liability for the spectators, players and coaches. Though removals can be done whenever it's convenient, scheduling them when play is at its lowest point (a.k.a., the off season) is the best approach. After all, if the arborist has the option to drop the tree horizontally as well as to cut off branches piece by piece, the cost and liability will be much less.

Long-term sports facility users may object to tree removal, especially if they have enjoyed the many benefits of trees-in-place over the years. Removal means an immediate loss of shade, and creates an openness that they might not be expecting. As a sports field manager, it's crucial to support your decision to remove the tree based on the performance of the turf and safety to the people using the fields. Keeping a maintenance book with documented original purpose, benefits, annualized costs of maintenance, potential liability, turfgrass performance over time, recommendations from ISA Certified Arborists, and intended replacements will bolster your case. **SFM**

*John C. Fech is a horticulturist with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and certified arborist with the International Society of Arboriculture. The author of two books and more than 400 popular and trade journal articles, he focuses his time on teaching effective landscape maintenance techniques, water conservation, diagnosing turf and ornamental problems, and encouraging effective bilingual communication in the green industry.*



*Well placed and maintained, small trees bring great value.  
All photos by John C. Fech*

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# Dreams Do Come True

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They built it. And people came. How the Field of Dreams became reality.

By John Kmitta





Millions of people tuned in August 12 to watch a regular-season Major League Baseball game between the New York Yankees and the Chicago White Sox. And although the game ended in Hollywood fashion with a walk-off home run, the night was not about the two teams that took the field. For this night was about the baseball field on which the game was played. That's because the field was situated in a cornfield in Dyersville, Iowa...and it was the stuff of dreams.



*Photo by Quinn Harris / MLB Photos via Getty Images*





Photo by Mary DeCicco / MLB Photos via Getty Images

In the iconic 1989 film “Field of Dreams,” Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner, has a vision of building a baseball diamond in his cornfield. Thanks to years of planning and hard work, Major League Baseball and its partners came together to make that vision a reality. Leading that effort was BrightView Sports Turf, which built and managed the field.

“Everything just came together there at the end,” said Murray Cook, president of BrightView Sports Turf. “We started this project two years ago, in August 2019. Obviously, we had to sit it out in 2020 because of COVID, but we still had hope the game would be played in 2021. I’m just really proud of the staff we had on board. Our design team of Populous and BaAM Productions, our project manager, and our BrightView team worked together in such a great way with the Commissioner’s office to bring their vision to reality. When I say it was a team effort, I really mean that.”

According to Cook, when game day rolled around, the best part for him was witnessing the reactions of everyone who was seeing the field in person for the first time – from the fans coming through the gates to the players stepping

onto the field to representatives from Major League Baseball and the Commissioner’s office taking their first tour of the field.

“I’ve been doing these types of events for a while, and I really enjoy being able to share the experiences with so many people,” said Cook. “When we were sent to inspect the site in 2015, we first looked at the original movie field. It just wasn’t going to work, because the field grades were off and there was not enough room to build all the temporary structures around that location. So we found a new site (in the corn) about 1,000 feet to the west of the movie field to build the MLB field. When you look at all that went into the planning over the past several years to build the ballpark and the field for this game, it’s something pretty incredible. I was always reminding new members of our team to live in the moment, because this game is going to be special for a lot of people.”

Getting to game day was not without its challenges. The Field of Dreams game was originally scheduled for August 2020; but, like most things in 2020, it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and was delayed until this year.



According to Cook, however, the extra year actually had some benefits. “From an agronomic standpoint, it gave the field another year to grow,” said Cook. “Last year, we had sod down by the end of May, so we only had about two months of growth.”

The extra year also allowed the BrightView team to stabilize the soils on the berms where the corn was planted, add irrigation, regrade some site drainage areas, and grow a better stand of corn for this year. After putting the field to bed this past winter, the typical field maintenance plan kicked in around late March or early April of 2021.

“We had some great partners in the area with John Deere being up the road,” said Cook. “They brought us all the equipment and everything that we really needed to perform all of our maintenance requirements. It was like any other high-end sports field – we were ready for somebody to play on it. And they did. They came!”

## Industry support

In addition to support from partners like John Deere, they received assistance from local sports field managers, Iowa Chapter STMA members, national STMA members and other sports field management professionals. For example, the entire tarp crew was from Dyersville and the areas around Dubuque, Iowa.

“80 percent of the people who built the field are from Iowa – many of the contractors, much of the equipment, the lighting company, Musco. It was a tip of the hat to the state of Iowa, Dubuque, Dyersville, and the Iowa Chapter,” said Cook. Our BrightView Sports Turf team that coordinated the build included Chad Olsen; Kevin Moses, CSFM; Isaiah Lienau, CSFM; Eric Ogden; and Tanner Dickherber, who are all from Iowa. We also brought in Iowa Sportsturf to lay our sod for us.

Cook added that people from Iowa also worked on the



Photo by John Deere



Photo by Quinn Harris / MLB Photos via Getty Images



Photo by Mary DeCicco / MLB Photos via Getty Images



Photo by Daniel Shirey / MLB Photos via Getty Images





Photo by Quinn Harris / MLB Photos via Getty Images

agricultural side with the farmers to grow the corn (and define the cornrows) beyond the outfield fence.

Also on hand to help get the field ready for game day were STMA President, Nick McKenna, CSFM, who is originally from Iowa; Ryan Woodley of the Milwaukee Brewers,

who is also from Iowa; and Will Schnell, former turf superintendent for the Rose Bowl, who is from the Midwest and previously worked with Cook.

"It's something we've tried to do with many of our projects, going back to Fort Bragg," said Cook. "We brought in quite a few of the local sports field managers from Minor League clubs to help with that project. It was in their state, and we felt it was important for them to be included and be a part of that special event. So we have carried that on to other projects we have managed, including Dyersville.

"All of it culminated to be pretty special," Cook added. "It was the first MLB game to ever be played in Iowa, and the field was in the best condition it could be."

### Looking ahead

Major League Baseball has already announced that another regular season MLB game will be played at the Field of Dreams in 2022 (this time featuring the Chicago Cubs and Cincinnati Reds). But long-term plans for the field – and its

## A Field of Dreams Timeline

**April 21, 1989:** Field of Dreams movie is released, earning three Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture

**October 2011:** "Go the Distance Baseball" purchases the Field of Dreams movie site from former owners Don and Becky Lansing

**Early 2015:** MLB considers new ways to inject excitement into the regular season by hosting games in smaller markets where MLB games aren't typically played

**June 18, 2015:** BaAM, Populous, and BrightView conduct initial site visit at Field of Dreams movie site

**July 3, 2016:** The Fort Bragg Game is the first regular season professional sports event ever held on an active military base and the first MLB game played in North Carolina, made possible by BaAM, Populous, and BrightView

**August 20, 2017:** Inaugural MLB Little League Classic is played at Historic Bowman Field, made possible by BaAM, Populous, and BrightView

*Timeline provided by BaAM Productions*

**December 13, 2017:** Field of Dreams is selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant"

**August 8, 2019:** MLB announces Yankees, White Sox to meet in "MLB at Field of Dreams" in August 2020 – a matchup between the two favorite clubs of lead character Ray's father, John Kinsella, at different points of his life

**August 2019:** Initial groundbreaking at Field of Dreams

**July 6, 2020:** MLB announces 60-game regionalized schedule due to COVID-19 pandemic, and St. Louis Cardinals are scheduled to play the Chicago White Sox at MLB at Field of Dreams

**August 4, 2020:** The scheduled MLB at Field of Dreams Game between the Chicago White Sox and St. Louis Cardinals is postponed

**August 12, 2021:** MLB at Field of Dreams Game takes place, featuring the original Chicago White Sox vs. New York Yankees matchup.



## Field Facts and Corn Stats

- The field was constructed with a 10-inch rootzone over a 4-inch pea gravel base with drain tiles spaced every 15 feet across the entire field.
- Before installing the subbase, 30,000 cubic yards of material was graded to balance the site.
- A Rainbird irrigation system and controller are supplied by a well that provides 80 psi to each head while running a couple zones at a time.
- The infield clay, mound mix and warning track mix is a DuraEdge product with a Turface conditioner.
- The turfgrass is 365ss blue-grass sod (a Mountain View Seeds product) from Madison, Wis.
- John Deere provided all the turf management equipment needed to grow-in the field and to maintain it at an MLB level.
- Most of the bases, hitting mats, cages screens, drags, etc., were from Beacon Athletics, Covermaster and C&H batting cages.
- The corn is a Dekalb field corn, which is engineered to grow 10 to 12 feet high. An irrigation system (installed in spring 2021) included elevated Rainbird Falcon rotors and a water gun from Landmark Irrigation that provided 125 gpm to irrigate all the critical corn areas around the MLB field and the movie site field.

use and management – have yet to be determined.

Following this year's game, the temporary stands and other back-of-house amenities were removed, and will be rebuilt for next year's game.

"We are in a cornfield, and the baseball field will be all that is left when BaAM finishes breaking down the rest of the temporary structures," said Cook. "There's not even a backstop. There are no bathrooms, and the lights

do not have a permanent power supply (they run on generators)."

According to Cook, for this year's game, BaAM Productions (which also handles the NHL Winter Classic events) began building the entire 8,000-seat structure, all the locker rooms, and other back-of-house structures and amenities on July 1, and completed the build by August 8. So the management and setup for next year's event will probably be much as

it was for this year.

For now, however, Cook is just happy with the result of all the effort that went into making the Field of Dreams a reality.

"I'm just proud of the way the field turned out at the end," he said. "It was really special, almost magical, from the game itself to the excitement of the fans that attended or watched it all over the world."

The night before the game, Kevin Costner toured the field and took a moment to play catch with his son on the field. Afterward, Cook had the opportunity to meet Costner, who paid the field the ultimate compliment.

Said Cook, "Kevin pointed at the grass and said, 'Is this real?'"

"It was a moment," Cook added. "It's perfect. For the industry, it just shines a spotlight on what we can do with natural grass, and the dreams it can make come true." **SFM**

*John Kmitta is associate publisher and editorial brand director of SportsField Management magazine.*



*Photo provided by BrightView Sports Turf*



# Professional Branding: Part 1

## LinkedIn: It is for sports field management professionals too!

*By Erin Wolfram and Melissa Johnson*



No matter the industry you are in, cultivating your personal brand and having a positive online presence are vital to your career success. Your personal brand is not only the unique combination of expertise, experience, skills and traits that make up who you are as a professional, but it is also how you portray yourself to others in person and online.

Your online image can drastically impact your career trajectory and/or people's perspective of the organization for which you work. Potential employers often search job applicants online, and patrons frequently conduct an online search of venues before visiting. The information they find helps them form their first impression of you and/or your facility. Have you searched your name

online recently? If not, do it now! Evaluate whether the information you find includes images, content or headlines that positively reflect your professional achievements. If you are unable to find any beneficial content about yourself, consider utilizing LinkedIn, a popular online platform, to help you elevate your online presence and build your personal brand. (Note: We will discuss



additional platforms – including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and online portfolios – in an upcoming article).

### **BUILDING A SOLID LINKEDIN PROFILE**

A person's LinkedIn profile is often one of the first results to appear when someone searches a name online, so it is important to spend some time crafting a well-developed and up-to-date profile. According to LinkedIn's website (<https://about.linkedin.com>), LinkedIn has more than 774 million members from more than 200 countries and territories, making it the largest networking site targeted specifically toward professionals. Although this platform may not immediately seem like a valuable tool for those in the sports field management industry, it certainly can be when utilized effectively. LinkedIn allows you to showcase your expertise and credibility within your industry, and gives you the opportunity to connect with other professionals in your field, as well as prospective visitors to your facility. Outlined below are specific steps you can take to help you build a compelling professional profile and make a positive first impression with potential connections.

#### **Upload a profile photo**

This helps establish legitimacy, and leads to more people engaging with your profile and posts. Choose a photo of you that clearly shows your smiling face. For the sports field management industry, a nice photo of you outside standing on a field you maintain often works well. Photo size should be 400 pixels wide by 400 pixels high.

#### **Add a background photo**

A nice landscape of the field(s) you manage would be perfect. This immediately captivates a viewer's attention, and shows off your work from the very beginning of your

profile. Photo size should be 1,586 pixels wide and 396 pixels high.

#### **Create an attention-grabbing headline**

Yes, you can simply use your current job title, but consider being more creative. This is one of the most important sections within your profile, because the description you include will appear next to your name in search results along with your profile picture. Therefore, it is essential that it accurately reflects your role, as well as persuades readers to learn more about you and your background. The headline is limited to 120 characters, so the key is to be compelling while also keeping it concise. Sample headlines include:

- Grounds Superintendent at Top-Rated Campus Facility in Alabama
- Turf Manager at 4.5-star Rated Baseball Complex in Charlotte, North Carolina
- Grounds Manager with Expertise in Perennial Cool-Season Grasses and Horticulture
- Sports Field Manager | Mentor | President of STMA MoKan

#### **Tell your story in the "About" section**

Showcase your personal brand by highlighting your key experiences, strengths, specialties and successes. Write your story in the first person, and show your personality by sharing some personal insight into what you enjoy outside of work. A sample about section is as follows:

*"I am a sports field management professional with 15-plus years of experience within public and private universities throughout the north-western United States. During 10 of those years, I led teams of 15-30 to maintain high-quality cool-season grasses, including Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and bentgrass varieties across diverse college sports facilities. I enjoy mentoring up-and-coming turfgrass professionals, and have been active*

*in regional professional organizations, most recently as the president of the Pacific Northwest Sports Turf Managers Association. While work does take up a majority of my time, I enjoy fishing, golfing and expending the energy of my German shepherd, Harley, as much as possible."*

#### **Highlight artifacts in the "Featured" section**

Include images, articles, websites, etc., that show off your work and professional achievements. You can upload files or insert web URLs.

#### **Expand on your relevant work history in the "Experience" section**

Add a brief description for each work experience outlining your accomplishments and incorporating keywords whenever possible. If you have been in the industry for several years, we recommend only including positions from the past 15 to 20 years at the most. Consider featuring media, when possible, to provide examples of your achievements. This can include such artifacts as photos of the fields you have managed and the web URLs of the organizations where you have worked. By adding images that demonstrate the results of your actions, it can serve as an abbreviated version of your electronic portfolio. This is why it is important to take photos of your work! The following is a sample experience entry:

*Grounds Manager, Northern Pacific University*

*Led sports turf operations and a team of 13 across a large campus with two soccer fields, football field and practice facility, and baseball and softball fields.*

- Upon hire, increased health and aesthetics of neglected turf-grass by implementing aggressive fertilizer and pesticide application programs to combat identified disease and pest infestations



■ *Enhanced organizational culture by explaining the how, why, and anticipated results of each task at hand to ensure thorough understanding and increase buy-in, resulting in motivated crew members who produced exceptional daily output*

■ *Named “Grounds Manager of the Year” for the Northwest region in 2019*

Include the URL of your LinkedIn profile on your resume so hiring managers can access these photos and other artifacts during the application process. You can customize your URL in the edit mode within your profile by going to “Edit public profile & URL.”

#### **Add any degrees you hold in the “Education” section**

Avoid including high school information.

#### **Include all applicable credentials in the “Licenses & Certifications” section**

Enter information related to applicator’s licenses or special industry-related certifications you currently hold.

#### **List professional memberships within the “Organizations” section**

Include information on any industry-related professional organizations in which you have been a member, as well as any committee involvement or leadership positions you have held.

#### **Showcase your professional competencies in the “Skills & Endorsements” section**

Create a list of at least 10 industry-specific skills, and prioritize your top three by moving them to the top of the list. Remember to consider turfgrass management and agronomy skills, as well as leadership and management strengths. Once you have identified your list of skills, your first-degree connections will be able to endorse you for any

of those competencies. Including skill endorsements in your profile can help you build your personal brand, strengthen your credibility within your industry, and potentially elevate your ranking in future LinkedIn searches.

*TIP: One of the best ways to receive skill endorsements on LinkedIn is to endorse others.*

#### **Add other sections as appropriate**

Consider including additional content such as volunteer experience, honors and awards, or languages that demonstrate your diverse range of skills, interests and qualifications.

#### **MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE**

Once you have your LinkedIn profile created or updated, use it to demonstrate your commitment to the industry by connecting with other professionals in your field, engaging with others’ content, sharing relevant information and resources, and posting original content related to happenings within your organization. Specific tips on how to effectively utilize the platform to foster professional growth and strengthen your network are as follows:

#### **Establish at least 50 first-degree connections**

If you are new to LinkedIn, once your profile is created, you will need to secure connections. It is suggested to acquire at least 50 connections as soon as possible to establish your presence and have an audience with whom you can engage. Start by sending connection requests to people you already know, including friends, family members, current and former supervisors and colleagues, former classmates, and members of professional organizations in which you are involved.

Once you reach 50, however, do not stop! Your LinkedIn profile is like an electronic business card. As you

meet new people, follow up after that initial introduction and invite them to connect on LinkedIn. You can also send connection requests to people you have not met yet but view as potentially valuable connections. For example, if you know you will be relocating to Houston, you might reach out to the board members of the Texas Sports Turf Managers Association to introduce yourself and ask them to connect with you so you can stay up-to-date on the turf management industry in that region. When sending a connection request to someone you do not know or have not communicated with recently, you should always send a personalized message with your request. Be aware that personalized connection requests are limited to 300 characters. The following is a sample connection request:

*Hello Sam,*

*I am also an STMA member and will be moving to Houston soon. I have been involved in my regional STMA chapter and hope to continue this through the TXSTMA. I am looking to connect with more turf management professionals in the Houston area on LinkedIn.*

*Thank you,  
Adam*

#### **Cultivate your LinkedIn feed**

Once you start securing connections, information posted and shared by your network will appear on your LinkedIn feed. To generate more relevant content, in addition to connecting with others, make sure to follow several industry-related influencers, companies and organizations, as well as join relevant groups. You can search for groups by typing keywords or group names into the search bar at the top of the page and selecting “groups” as your filter.





### **Interact with others' content**

Once content begins to show in your LinkedIn feed, start engaging with the information by liking, commenting and sharing. Your activity will automatically show up on your profile. Also, LinkedIn rewards you for engaging with content within your feed by increasing the visibility of content you post from your profile. Make sure to check your LinkedIn feed at least once a week, or more often, if possible.

### **Post original content**

To further demonstrate your expertise and commitment to your field, post your own content, including helpful industry-related resources and tips, facility photos and updates, job opportunities with your organization, etc. You can even write and share original articles on topics of your choice. Your content will be visible in the page feeds of your connections, which allows them to start engaging with you too!

Having a solid LinkedIn profile can lead to potential job opportunities, attract talent and visitors to your facility, help you establish yourself as an expert in your field, and ultimately elevate your personal brand. Once you have a strong LinkedIn profile and start using it as an effective professional tool, remember to keep it updated so it accurately represents you.

If you are interested in using LinkedIn but are not comfortable tackling this tool yourself, our career coach-

es at Career Advantage Golf (<https://careeradvantagegolf.com>) specialize in providing LinkedIn profile development and optimization services for turf management professionals. We would be happy to help you build your profile and use it to your advantage. **SFM**

*Erin Wolfram has more than 15 years of experience in career services, and owns and operates Career Advantage Golf (<http://careeradvantagegolf.com>), specializing in career services for those in the turf management field. She has a podcast called A Year of Career: 52 Practical Answers to Your Questions, where she provides quick career and job search advice. Wolfram has a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education, Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, Master of Science in Educational Technology, and is a certified professional etiquette consultant. She can be reached at [erin@careeradvantageresumes.com](mailto:erin@careeradvantageresumes.com).*

*Melissa Johnson has more than 20 years of experience working with individuals from a variety of careers and industries. She specializes in one-on-one career coaching, resume and cover letter development, and job search assistance. Johnson has a passion for providing individualized support and guidance for each of her clients to ensure they are able to achieve their career goals. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master of Education in Counseling Psychology.*



# The *SportsField Management* Interview: Pamela Sherratt

In this edition of The *SportsField Management* Interview, we meet Pamela Sherratt, turfgrass specialist and lecturer, Department of Horticulture & Crop Science, The Ohio State University (OSU). Sherratt teaches undergraduate classes in plant and turfgrass science, and manages online certificates for industry professionals. She also develops seminars and workshops for turf managers and youth groups in the green industry, speaks at conferences, and writes for several media outlets. She received her BSc (Hons) horticulture degree from the University of Central Lancashire in England, and her MS turfgrass degree from OSU. Sherratt served on the STMA Board of Directors in 2010 and 2011, and was the recipient of the Dr. William H. Daniel Founders Award in 2003 and 2018.

**SportsField Management (SFM):** Please tell us about your background, what attracted you to a career in the turfgrass industry, and your overall career path.

**Sherratt:** I'm from an arable farming community called Scarisbrick in England. So, from about the age of 12, I would work what we called "Saturday jobs," packing potatoes, packing beets, cutting cabbages and mushrooms. My uncle Stan also had a plant nursery a few miles away. I would bike over there, and help with pricking out, potting and working with plants. I think I've always known I wanted to work with plants, and I have always loved it.

I left school at 16, like most English kids do, or did, and I got a job at a plant nursery, and one day a week I would go to college. It was a government initiative called the Youth Training Scheme, although we nicknamed it the youth torture scheme. You got paid 25 pounds a



week, and you would put in 32 hours of work per week. Your boss would work you hard, and one day a week you would go to college. So I did sort of a 101 level course in horticulture.

When I was 16, my mom also sent me to a stay-over summer camp for a week, and I got to do horticulture at a college. I absolutely loved it. We did welding and tractor driving and pricking out and double digging and planting vegetable gardens. It was a terrific week, and that solidified it for me; I knew this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. That is why I started the STEM camp at Ohio State a couple years ago, because I wanted to see if we could get

young people involved by doing a similar taster course.

When I was 17, after my year at the plant nursery and the day release college, I did a National Certificate in Horticulture, which was one year, full time, live in at Myerscough College, which is a big agricultural college in England.

Then I did a National Diploma in Horticulture (NDH), which was a three-year course (similar to an associate's degree). Both of my internships on the NDH were at plant nurseries, because I wanted to be landscape designer and work with ornamentals and landscape plants.

I graduated with my NDH when I was 20. Myerscough College opened up a job for a technician in horticulture, so I applied for the job and got it. I went from being a student at Myerscough to being a technician, working with the faculty and staff, teaching the practicums. The professor would do the lecture, and then the students would come to me for the practicums. That was in 1990, and between 1990 and 1999 I did my four-year degree (Bsc. Hons degree in Horticulture) part time while I worked at Myerscough. During that time I was a technician for the greenhouse team and landscape team, but I also did





some technician work for the turf team. When I met the turf team and we got to visit Liverpool Football Club and Royal St. George's, Royal Birkdale, and other Open venues, I was like, "This is it. Now I've really found my niche." It was about 1993 that I switched to the turf team full time. So I became the technician in the turf team and I got my degree, and then I started teaching some of the classes. My instructional lectures were conducted on Myerscough's many sports fields and 9-hole golf course. I ended up becoming the program manager for the National Diploma in Turf by the time I left.

What got me over here [to Ohio State University] is that Dr. Karl Danneberger and some of the professors at OSU used to speak at a yearly conference at Myerscough. Martyn Jones ran the turf program at Myerscough, and he was really good friends with the OSU turf team. I was asked in 1998 to go to Ohio and work at the turf farm for the summer for Dr. Danneberger. The goal was to bring back some of the techniques and find out what the Americans were doing; it would help my teaching at Myerscough, and we could share ideas. I came over in 1998 just for the summer; but, while I was here, a position opened up, and I applied for it and came back full time in 1999.

Mike O'Keefe runs the international internship program at Ohio State. He sends American students abroad to learn from green industry professionals, and he also brings students into the states to learn turf, horticulture and agronomy. It's a student exchange program based

at Ohio State. I have known him since the Myerscough days, and we get along really well. He helped me come over the summer of 1998, and he helped me come back over in 1999. He has helped hundreds of people with their turf career. There are turf managers all over the world in superintendent positions and stadium manager positions who have done that program through Mike O'Keefe. I tell people he's the Kevin Bacon of turf.

It was a magical time at Myerscough, and, whether you want to call it right place at the right time, everything just fell into place – knowing the right people, taking advantage of those connections, jumping on it, and not being afraid to do it. I wouldn't have the courage now to do what I did then. In 1999, my husband and I had two suitcases each and came to Columbus, Ohio, with nothing, and just made it work.

When I came over in 1999, I got a job as a research technician at the research farm, and was able to do my Master's degree (in Turfgrass Science) part time. It has evolved from there, and my job has changed since then, but that is how I got to Ohio State.

**SFM:** Please tell us about your current role, and your typical day (if there is such a thing).

**Sherratt:** I teach about 1,000 students per year. I have face-to-face classes and online classes. I teach a basic plant science class and I teach sports turf management





classes. I manage online certificate programs, and I have an extension appointment – so I do field visits, magazine articles, seminars, STEM camp, and I serve on industry boards.

My typical day would be teaching classes, developing extension materials, answering phone calls, managing and planning. Right now, we are busy putting together the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) conference and show for December. We are lining up speakers. I also serve on the Ohio Chapter STMA (OSTMA) board.

The majority of my extension work is based around seminars and conferences. I get invited to speak at a lot of places, I put together the program for the OTF conference in December, and we put a spring conference on as well. At the turf farm we work with 4-H groups and FFA and other youth groups. We have other events around Ohio where I try to have a presence. I write articles for OTF, OSTMA and STMA. And I maintain a social media presence as well.

**SFM:** What has the last year and a half been like for you with regard to getting through COVID and related challenges?

**Sherratt:** From a work standpoint, because I have been working with online classes and online certificate programs for years, online teaching didn't frighten me. I know how to develop online material, I work with videos, and I know how to make interactive projects for students that can be done online. So it was an easy transition for me. But I know the students struggled with it, because they missed that human interaction. So we would have one meeting per week where we would just talk about the best restaurants in town or they would come on and show me their pets or their houseplants. The biggest struggle for me was feeling frustrated

knowing that there were students at home or on campus alone and isolated, feeling disconnected from me and the university; knowing that they were struggling, and not knowing what to do about it.

But teaching online was not a concern for me, and I'm still online until spring (my first face-to-face class will be in the spring). I've developed projects and assignments the students can do that are interactive. It's not just, "Read this article and answer a quiz." I try to make it interactive as much as possible.

From a personal standpoint and being at home all the time, my kids were out of school completely from March 2020 to March 2021. I have two boys, ages 15 and 12, and I was a home schooler – every working parent was. My husband was working from home as well. Instead of everybody eating out all day long, everybody is eating in all day long, so there is triple the mess, triple the housework, and triple the noise. I'm sure we struggled like everybody else with four people in a house all day long every day. But I was extremely fortunate that I could work from home, and I didn't lose my job, and my husband didn't lose his job, and the kids did okay at school. So you can't ask for more than that.





## JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



### ANSWER

*From page 17*

After this softball field was constructed and ready for its first game, these wet patches began appearing. The athletic fields and grounds supervisor dug a hole into the first wet spot to find that it filled up with water within 10 minutes. Additional wet patches began to appear all over the infield area, forcing the game to be cancelled. The field had an engineered clay mixture installed at 3 to 4 inches deep. The field was constructed on an area of campus that was formerly a marsh type area. To add to the problem, heavy clay soil was moved from one construction area on the grounds to this field and used as fill. Also, the field drains from right field all the way across the skin area with an 8-inch drop from right field to third base. To fix the problem, a perimeter drain was installed to intercept the water shedding from the outfield and also a leach fields with drain lines was installed under the clay to remove excess water that traveled under the clay. A tarp is also used if rain is in the forecast before a game day to prevent water from entering into the engineered clay mixture and upwelling. The combination of these three remedies allowed the final field to become highly playable.

**Photos submitted by Matt Tobin of Pioneer Athletics. Story told by Jason Chisholm, grounds supervisor at Freeport High School, RSU5 in Freeport, Maine.**

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz, please send it to John Mascaro, 1471 Capital Circle NW, Ste. #13, Tallahassee, FL 32303 call 850-580-4026 or email to [john@turf-tec.com](mailto:john@turf-tec.com). If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos submitted will become property of SportsField Management and the Sports Turf Managers Association.

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**SFM:** Outside of COVID-related challenges, what are the biggest challenges that you face on a regular basis, and how do you approach those?

**Sherratt:** A lot of the classes I teach are very big numbers. I think the maximum I've ever had is 450 in my sports turf management class. It becomes a numbers game, and it's difficult to make personal connections. This fall, in my World of Plants class, which is my basic plant science class, I have 250. I like to have personal connections, and I want the students to feel personally connected to me, so I always find that a challenge.

I'm very excited when I develop something new. Once I've developed something new and it's working and running along, I want to move along to the next thing. I find the day-to-day stuff really challenging for me. I like to develop something, move on, develop something, move on... I like new and exciting things.

I used to do a lot of extension-type research. Since I've been teaching more I've moved away from that a bit, and I felt sad about that. I put a trial out for field day this week – a trial on establishment with coated and treated seeds – and I loved it. I loved putting the trial out, I loved talking about it.

I'm excited that we've got a new department chair, Dr. Doug Karcher. He has already reached out to me to meet and try to come up with some goals and plans, and to find out what I want to do... and he's a turf guy. He has some great ideas and a great vision for the program – increasing student numbers, working with the industry, and developing relationships. And I see those as my strengths. People are my strength. Developing new things is my strength. Putting together seminars and events and conferences is my strength. So I'm going to sit down with him and come up with some goals for the next few years.

**SFM:** What trends have you seen with regard to the amount of students interested in the turfgrass industry?

**Sherratt:** Like everybody else around the country, our student numbers have dipped significantly. I'm excited about Dr. Karcher's new position, because I know that one of his goals is to promote and market our majors, and make it a focus to increase student numbers and get the word out that we exist.

I've definitely seen an uptick in interest in the sports turf side. When I first came here 22 years ago, I would say it was 90 percent golf; now it's probably equal parts golf and sports turf. Our student numbers have significantly reduced, but the sports turf sector is as enticing as the golf.

**SFM:** How has the turfgrass industry changed for women over the years? What changes still need to take place? And what needs to happen to get more women interested in careers in this industry?

**Sherratt:** I think this year has seen a turning point. What they did at the U.S. Women's Open this year with the female crew, and the press coverage that was gained from that, and having representation... people want to







see representation of themselves. If you open a magazine or turn on the TV or go on social media and see women in that role, that's what it takes. I think we overthink it sometimes. I would love to see a women's crew at the World Cup and other major events. That type of coverage in media is what is going to do it. It's representation; that is what it comes down to. You want to see someone you connect with doing a job that you might find interesting.

It also helps when people physically meet turf managers – whatever gender they are. This industry is so down to earth, and so friendly and helpful – those human interactions and heartfelt connections that we make with each other are so important. Young people want to feel those connections. Once we get them interested in our industry, we can keep them.

**SFM:** Who were your mentors in the industry, or who has impacted your career the most?

**Sherratt:** Martyn Jones, head of turf at Myerscough College, was the ultimate servant leader and my first mentor. He brought me on at 20 years old. He encouraged me to do my part-time bachelor's degree, and he let me take days off to take classes. He supported me when I wanted to do a sabbatical at Turnberry Golf Club in Scotland in the summer of 1995, and he sent me to America for the summer of 1998 to develop my skill set. I came back from America to announce that I was leaving, and he was happy for me. He encouraged me to do it. He could have said, "You just took six weeks to go to America, and now you are going to leave me high and dry?" But he didn't. Martyn always put people first, and he wanted what was best for the people who worked for him and with him.

I wouldn't be in America if it weren't for Mike O'Keef-



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fe. There are hundreds of people around the world who would tell you the same thing about Mike.

Lastly, I'm incredibly lucky to work with the turf team at Ohio State. We've never had a cross word and they are like my family. I'm incredibly lucky to work with the Drs. Karl, Dave and John. We support each other, and we work well together.

**SFM:** What are the biggest accomplishments of your career and/or what are you most proud to have achieved?

**Sherratt:** My biggest achievement – the thing I am most proud of – is my students. I have students all over the world that I have taught. Their success is hopefully my legacy – successful students who have gone on to be the best in their industry, the best in their field. Knowing those people are out there, and that they have had those experiences, and they have successful jobs really makes me feel good.

From an agronomic standpoint, I'm proud that I have done a lot of applied research on turf management systems like hybrid turf systems and practices like PGRs, topdressing, turf selection, renovation, etc. I can share those experiences with turf managers through my extension and outreach efforts.

Outside of work-work, I'm a Scout leader, and I have come to the realization that everything I do in my career I can do in Scouts (and vice versa) – making those human connections with the youth, being a servant leader, helping them grow, and being part of their successful life journey is the same as my teaching. I'm as equally proud of my Scout efforts as I am of my career

**SFM:** How has your career benefitted from being involved with STMA? And what is your advice to others regarding the value of being involved and giving back to the industry through service?



**Sherratt:** I've been a member since 1999. I remember going to the St. Louis conference in 2000, not knowing anybody, except Brian Gimbel. He was the director of grounds at OSU, and I'd only just met him. I was a female, I was English, I didn't know anybody, and I was immediately accepted by everybody. I couldn't believe it. I had never come across an association like that before. I wasn't standing in a corner on my own. Those connections were immediate, and I knew it was a special group of people.

I've learned so much over the years as far as technical information and agronomy. It's nice to be able to talk with the other academics to find out what is going on at their institutions. It's nice to have people going through the same challenges as you, and you can support each other.

I look forward to the STMA Conference every year, and I look forward to it for the people. Obviously I learn a lot, but it's the people that I go for – hanging out with them, learning from them, supporting them – it's the people. You can get so much from those connections.

As to the second part of your question, I think it's extremely important to give back to the industry. Every interaction you have with another human being leaves







a mark. If you walk away from someone and you made them feel bad, they remember; if you made them feel good, they remember. Every interaction counts. You paying it forward can mean that when you go to a conference, and you see someone at the reception on their own, going over to that person and saying “Hi. Who are you? Come join us.” That person is going to remember that moment for the rest of their life. My advice to people would be, yes, get involved, but also look for those moments. When you are at the conference in Savannah this January, at the welcome reception, look around the room. You are going to see people that don’t know anybody – like I was years ago. Go up to that person and include them. That is your first step in paying it forward.

**SFM:** How do you think the profession and industry will change in the next 10 years, and/or what would you most like to see in terms of industry advancement in the future?

**Sherratt:** I love the momentum I am seeing as far as diversity in the industry, but we’ve still got a long way to go. We need to appeal to all cultures, all races, all genders, all ages. We need representation from the real world. We are only going to get young people coming into this industry if they feel like they are represented in the industry, and they see board members and committee members and speakers who are like them and make them feel included. We have a major labor shortage in the green industry right now, so this topic needs to be front and center.

Technology is coming along, and keeps revolutionizing the industry to the point that fields are looking as good on the last day of the season as they did on the first day of the season. Light technology and field sensors/data collectors are gaining speed. And I think we’ll use more autonomous machine and vehicles for mowing and painting, especially with the labor shortages.

I love seeing sports turf managers being treated like professionals. In the last 20 years that has gone from strength to strength to strength, and STMA has been the driver of that. People feel more connected now. Twitter is a pretty big meeting place in turf. We are sharing technology and sharing ideas and supporting each other on that platform. I think that is going to continue to improve things.

We’ve got to do something about getting young people into the industry. I think part of the problem is that we are agronomists – not personnel specialists. We’ve got to understand millennials and Gen Z’s. and we can’t complain that they don’t want to work 60-hour weeks and sleep in their office. We’ve got to come up with solutions. They don’t want to work 60 hours a week and sleep in their office – and nobody should be working 60 hours and sleeping in their office.

I listened to a conference talk by Jake Tyler, who used to be with the Toledo Mud Hens. He is also a balloon pilot and had taken some sort of special forces training session for his balloon pilot’s license. The crux of it was that everybody on the team needs to be able to do everybody’s job. So he took that philosophy back to work. If everybody can do everybody’s job, then you don’t all need to be there until 11:00 at night, every night, on an 11-day home stand. You can go to your kid’s birthday party or graduation party because everybody on the team is trained to do each other’s jobs. So there are solutions out there, and I would like to see more of that. I would like to see sports turf managers paid a fair wage for what they do, and don’t have to work themselves to death. We can come up with solutions for time management.

**SFM:** You mentioned your sons and your involvement in Scouts. Please tell us a bit more about yourself outside of work.

**Sherratt:** My husband and I are both Scout leaders, and a big chunk of my time outside of work is in Scouting. I volunteer at the council level, the district level, I go camping with the Scouts, and I teach an environmental science merit badge. Scouting is a huge part of my life. When I am not Scouting, we have a travel trailer and we go glamping (i.e., there’s air conditioning and wine). Basically, I love gardening, bird watching and anything outdoors.

**SFM:** Is there anything you would like to add?

**Sherratt:** Like most people in this industry, I didn’t initially chose sports turf as a career, I just sort of came across it, and realized how cool and friendly it was. I’m so glad I found it. We need to help others find it too. **SFM**



# Equipment Tips to Prepare You for Winter

By Nick Minas

As temperatures start to drop, signaling the end of summer and the start of fall, most sports field management operations may be slowing down while others are preparing for the offseason. This is the perfect time to get your equipment and staff ready for winter. As professionals shift from grounds maintenance to other jobs, such as fall cleanup and snow removal, it is critical to take the right steps to be set up for success.

## Clean your machines

After months and months of maintaining grounds and fields, your equipment has accumulated a good bit of dirt and debris, which can be damaging if left untouched for a long period of time.

While you have hopefully been cleaning on a regular basis throughout the work season, take a little time to clean your equipment prior to putting it away for the winter. Clean your equipment using pressurized air where possible. However, if water is necessary, a low-pressure and low-flow water is recommended to protect electronics.

By cleaning your machine, you will be able to prevent rust and corrosion. Additionally, a clean machine will make it easier when you go to give your machine a tune-up. On a clean machine, you'll easily see if any parts are missing or loose. Also, as you are cleaning, look for any chips or scratches, and repair as necessary. Come spring, your machines will be spotless and ready to go.

## Revamp your equipment

The fall and winter seasons provide a great opportunity to revamp your equipment, whether through routine maintenance, or major repairs that will lead to machine downtime. It is important to refer to the owner's manual to ensure that you are completing the necessary maintenance to keep your machine up and running.

Routine maintenance, like an oil change, is good to perform at this time, ensuring that your machine will be ready to go once spring arrives. Also, give tires a once over. Winter weather can affect tire pressure, particularly if machines have been stored for months. Check the tire pressure and examine treads for wear.

The mower deck and blade are the most important parts of your mower. Take the opportunity during fall and winter to inspect and replace any excessively worn belts, or make repairs to the deck shell. A busy mowing season can take a toll on a mower deck and blade, so it is a good

idea to pay extra attention to those parts in the offseason.

Check blades for dullness and corrosion. If the blade is dull, sharpen it to ensure a quality cut. Replace any blades that have logged too many hours. It is also important to check blade balance for an even cut.

Prior to storing equipment for an extended period, lubricate and cover grease fittings, per your owner's manual. Use manufacturer-recommended lubricants, as they were designed to perform to the manufacturer's specification.

Additionally, be sure to add fuel stabilizers. A fuel stabilizer prevents separation that can lead to corrosion. Simply run the engine for five minutes to ensure the stabilizer is distributed throughout the fuel system. It is always a best practice to change the oil right before storage or before your first start-up. Also, check coolant if your equipment is liquid cooled. Finally, remove the battery, clean up its terminals, and charge it in the offseason.

Proper service is key to keep the machine running smoothly. While you may believe that you will remember the work you performed in December, by the time March arrives, you probably will have forgotten. Track maintenance in a logbook, which will give you something to refer to in the spring.

## Examine your fleet

The offseason is the perfect time to examine your fleet, and evaluate what you might need for the next season. The first step is to audit your equipment and note any aged equipment that may need to be replaced. Connect with your dealer, who can help not only determine what equipment you need, but also guide you through the pur-



chasing process. If you do need to purchase equipment, meet with your dealer to prepare a quote, and consider all payment options, including upfront cash, financing offers, and leasing offers.

Parts management is vital to limiting machine downtime. Take some time this offseason to revamp your parts department, which will improve your profitability once the mowing season starts up again. First, assign inventory ownership, limiting the number of employees with access to parts storage. With one person overseeing the parts department, it ensures efficient management of the inventory.

Organize and label bin locations, creating a designated, labeled part storage location so that the manager is aware of where things are and what needs restocking. Include a minimum stocking level on the label so the manager knows when things need to be reordered.

Finally, create an immediate tracking process and schedule regular inventory reviews. It may be tempting to wait until the end of the day to track parts that were used, but that increases the chances that a part will be used without notice. Establish an immediate tracking mechanism through work orders or spreadsheets to limit the risk of forgetting a part. Then, on a periodic basis, review the parts inventory, using the time to examine what is being used and adjust minimum levels accordingly. Add or remove parts that are needed or not needed anymore. If new machines join the fleet, make sure you have the right parts. As fleets grow, so does the need for parts. By revamping your process now, you can avoid unnecessary setbacks come spring.

### Consult with your equipment dealer

Selecting the right equipment is another key to successfully being prepared for winter. But there are so many options on the market that choosing the right machine for the application can often feel overwhelming. Fortunately, an equipment dealer is a great resource to help identify the right machine for the job. A dealer will be able to walk you through the options and discuss property size and type, the type of jobs you would like to complete, as well as any other special needs.

The primary machines used to maintain land during the winter are utility vehicles, front mowers and compact utility tractors. While all three machines have benefits and features that make each ideal for winter maintenance, each machine can also be used for jobs in warmer months as well.

Utility vehicles can be a great solution for maintenance during the winter months due to the versatility of the machine. From transporting handheld equipment, materials (such as salt) and crewmembers to using attachments to prep the grounds before a winter storm, utility



vehicles are great for winter maintenance. The ability to customize utility vehicles with a heated cab is ideal for winter, as it keeps workers comfortable and productive, even in below-freezing temperatures. Additionally, utility vehicles are designed to be compatible with a wide variety of attachments. For example, blade attachments can make snow plowing more manageable, while bed sprayers can also double as a de-icing mechanism.

A machine often associated with warm-weather jobs is the front mower. While the name may be deceiving, front mowers are ideal for winter work, including snow blowing and plowing. Implements such as snow blowers can attach to front mowers and clear even the most difficult-to-remove snow. Those located in areas with less snowfall should consider using a rotary broom or blade to remove lighter amounts of snow much more efficiently. Most front mowers have a cab option, which further enhances the appeal for users during the cold months.

Another machine to consider for winter work is a compact utility tractor. Commonly associated with mowing and digging, compact utility tractors can handle a wide variety of tasks through the use of implements. In winter months, blades, blowers, snow pushers and brooms help keep grounds clear in even the heaviest of snow. Also available with a heated cab, compact utility tractors allow operators to stay productive in all conditions. Additionally, the ability to use other implements, including mowers, loaders and backhoes makes compact utility tractors a great solution for maintenance throughout the year.

With winter fast approaching, it's imperative to make sure equipment is properly prepared for the frigid temperatures. Always maximize the use of attachments and implements, make sure equipment is properly serviced and in good standing, and properly store machines if they won't be used during the winter months. **SFM**

*Nick Minas is go-to market manager at John Deere.*



# MOWERS



## TORO REELMASTER 3555-D/3575-D

The Toro Reelmaster 3555-D with 5-inch reels, and the Reelmaster 3575-D with 7-inch reels both deliver a 100-inch width of cut. These machines feature Toro's Dual Precision Adjustment cutting units with EdgeSeries reels, which retain their edge longer and provide a clean cut. The traction system and three-wheel design enhance maneuverability in rough conditions and minimize turnaround time.



## JOHN DEERE 7700A PRECISIONCUT

The John Deere 7700A PrecisionCut offers the eHydro hydrostatic pump and large-capacity motors for serious hill-climbing capabilities. The GRIP all-wheel drive traction system provides superior traction by reducing wheel slip. Exclusive LoadMatch lets you cut through wet, lush grass evenly by slowing down the traction speed. The TechControl display on each of the

machines allows sports field managers to input a wealth of commands, including mow speed, turn speed, engine speed, and service timers, and provides on-board service diagnostics. The 7700A model compensates the traction speed while mowing if the cutting units or decks come under heavy load to help maintain cut quality.



## TURFKEEPER AND TURFKEEPER PRO FINISH MOWERS FROM WOODS EQUIPMENT COMPANY

Woods Equipment Company introduced two new rear-mount finish mowers: TurfKeeper standard-duty and TurfKeeper Pro premium-duty. A significant level of customer research provided the basis for the design updates to the current RD and PRD series finish mowers. Enhancements include quick-hitch readiness as shipped from the factory, and an improved driveline holder for ease of attachment. New high-lift blades, under-deck baffling, and wider discharge outlet combine to provide best-in-class cut quality. Other new features, such as belt shields with thumbscrew attachment (no tools required), ductile iron sheaves for better belt grip and a robust gearbox warranty (TurfKeeper Pro – 6 years; TurfKeeper – 3 years) make maintenance easier and less costly. The TurfKeeper is avail-

able in 60- and 72-inch cutting widths, and is intended for use on tractors between 15 and 35 PTO horsepower or less, while the TurfKeeper Pro offers 60-, 72- and 84-inch cutting widths for use on tractors between 15 and 50 PTO horsepower.



## COUNTRY CLIPPER BOSS XL COMMERCIAL SERIES

Re-engineered from the wheels up, the Country Clipper Boss XL provides turf care professionals with enhanced performance and operator comfort. The Boss XL features a virtually indestructible deck, roomy cockpit and fully articulating deck suspension. A deluxe adjustable suspension seat offers operators exceptional comfort, while smooth joystick or twin-lever steering provides optimum control. The Boss XL features a heavy-duty, 5-inch-deep, fully welded deck available in 60- and 72-inch cutting widths. It is powered by 31-hp. and 35-hp. Kawasaki engines. Country Clipper uses Hydro-Gear's Commercial ZT-5400 transmission on the Boss XL series, providing speed and torque. The Boss XL is equipped with a panel-mounted electric fuel gauge with a 10-1/4-gallon fuel capacity.



### DEWALT X554

The DeWalt X554 54-inch 26-hp. Kawasaki EFI gas hydrostatic commercial stand-on zero-turn mower features stand-on functionality with a large platform for quick on-and-off transitions to remove mowing obstructions with minimal job interruption. It is built for heavy-duty use with a strong frame matched with a premium pump and high-performance wheel motor transmission. The commercial-grade 26-hp. Kawasaki FT EFI engine with electronic throttle provides dependable startup. The large hip pad adjusts and matches the operator's height for ergonomic, all-day comfort. And a hydrostatic transmission, coupled with smooth controls, provides instant response times. The X554 boasts a two-year, no-hour-limit warranty. Every product in the new lineup of DeWalt gas outdoor power equipment comes with access to the Pro Support Hub available through the app or website. Owners can call, text or go online for one-on-one, dedicated support, including video call capabilities.

### FERRIS IS6200

Ferris Mowers' all-new IS6200 zero-turn mower delivers all-day productivity crews rely on to keep fields and grounds in peak condition all season long. Featuring a wide 72-inch deck and a multi-patented indepen-



dent suspension system (a technology similar to the shocks on your car), the Ferris IS6200 improves cut quality, traction and operator comfort, resulting in a greater mowing speed—delivering up to a 20% increase in productivity compared to mowers without it. To put that in perspective, that's like packing five days of work into four. Powering the IS6200's is a Cat C1.7 turbo diesel engine with a life expectancy between 4,000 and 5,000 hours, double that of gas engines. The IS6200's heavy-duty components also add to the unit's longevity.



### KUBOTA NEXT GENERATION SZ SERIES COMMERCIAL STAND-ON MOWERS

Kubota Tractor Corporation's next generation SZ Series commercial stand-on mowers includes the SZ19NC-36-2 with a 36-inch cutting deck, SZ22NC-48-2 with a 48-inch cutting deck, SZ26NC-52-2 with a 52-inch cut-

ting deck, and the SZ26NC-61-2 with a 61-inch cutting deck. Improvements include adjustable cutting deck baffles, improved serviceability, and better tire performance. All SZ Series mowers are equipped with Kawasaki FX and FT Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) commercial engines and hydro-gear transmissions. The SZ Series was designed with a low center of gravity for exceptional stability and fast travel speeds of up to 11 mph, depending on the model. The new SZ Series models replace the original line of SZ mowers.



### WALKER MODEL B23

Perfect for users looking for carbureted, commercial mowing power, the Walker B23 packs a lot of muscle into a compact footprint. The B23 features a new chassis and body design, reducing weight and accentuating hillside stability. Year-round capabilities include versatile winter attachments and a variety of deck options. The Model B is compact and fast. It is a Walker Mower designed to run side discharge and mulch decks on difficult properties with hills, uneven terrain and obstacles, while leaving a beautiful cut. With four different models to choose from, the Model B is configurable and versatile to meet the professionals' expectations. **SFM**



The following are some industry Tweets from the past month:



**@bermuda419s**

Let's get it on!!!! #GODEVILS

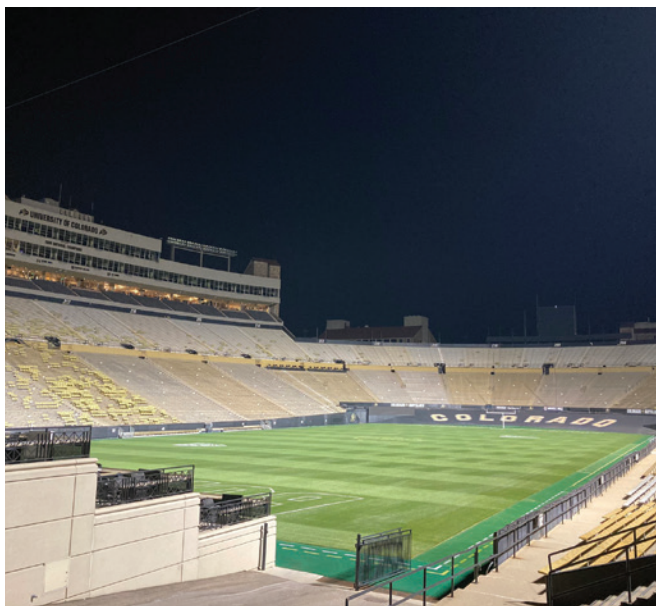
**SEPTEMBER 1**



**@PSUTurfRainman**

Students working in ID and sprinkler operation. Plus weather, plus clouds, plus dewpoint...good group so far! #psuirrigation #psuplantscience #psuturf

**AUGUST 31**



**@CUBuffsTurf**

Go time.

@CUBuffsFootball #GoBuffs #PaintDay

**SEPTEMBER 1**

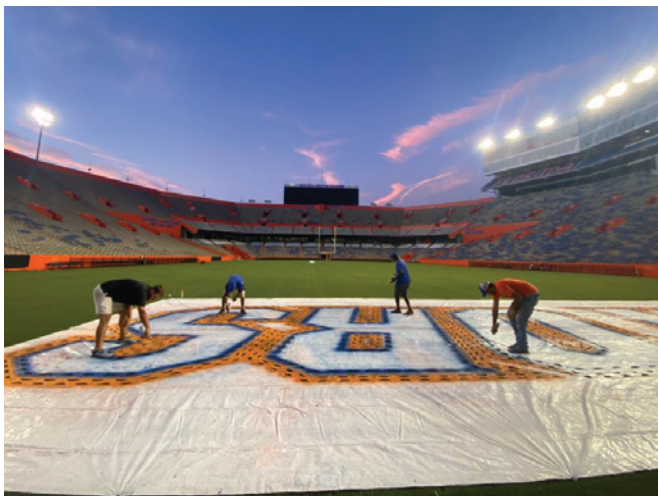


**@TampChamp**

#JumboCheckers

**AUGUST 31**





**@GatorTurfStaff**

Laying out logos this morning. Wonder what color combo we should do this week? #GameWeek #GoGators

**AUGUST 31**



**@nsherry2**

We're hanging in there. Hot

**AUGUST 28**



**@VTTurfgrass**

Our 2021 @Virginia\_Tech #Turfgrass Field Day is underway! Starting the morning off with @VATurf and Dr. Xunzhong Zhang sharing their #research on Lawn Fertility with Biosolids.

**AUGUST 31**



**@BereaGrounds**

Taking a page from @msstate\_CL & showcasing some of our great landscaping on campus @bereacollege

**AUGUST 27**



# Sports Field Management Trends: Part 1

In an effort to keep the pulse of the industry, *SportsField Management* recently reached out to industry professionals for their insights regarding current trends in the industry, challenges being faced, feedback they are receiving from others in the industry, positive developments, and their overall outlook for the industry. The following are comments from those who responded:

One of the biggest trends that I see sports field managers dealing with is the manpower shortage and, in particular, lack of a sufficient number of skilled workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has only amplified those issues, with many workers choosing to stay at home or choosing to take higher-paying jobs in other industries (jobs that offer things that many sports field managers can't afford, such as a bump in starting salary, a bonus just for applying, less labor-intensive responsibilities and air conditioning). Some sports field managers rely on the addition of part-time summer help, but they have trouble finding people interested in these kind of jobs and then worry about who will keep showing up for work. Some that I have spoken to blame the heat, the hours and labor-intensive work for the struggles to find employees. Others blame a lack of work ethic, and many point to generational shifts. Let's be brutally honest, a lot of young Americans don't want to do manual labor anymore when they can get \$15 an hour working fast food. Struggling to find entry-level workers and to pay them a competitive salary will be a challenge to many, and some sports field managers may leave the industry if they are burned out by the extra workload. I believe the key is to improve time management, offer competitive compensation packages to keep the best workers around, and provide an environment that workers enjoy.

– Paul Hollis, executive vice president, Redexim North America

Based off of everything I am seeing, labor is the main issue that everyone is having. More games to make up for the ones missed, and not bringing back staff that was laid off. Trending wise, I think people are looking at robots more. The painting robot has been on more and more Twitter pages. Autonomous equipment will take off with the labor shortage. That turns into GPS and drones taking off more if they can afford them. Everything else is the same thing we have always had. Some people don't know what they can use, and are asking questions because they never have before. I think people would like more information on things like recycle dressing, shockwave, and fraise mowing, but they don't have the time and are scared.

– Weston Floyd, research associate, Texas A&M University, Department of Soil and Crop Sciences

There are two major issues facing sports field managers as a result of the pandemic.

The first is labor. For example, I consult for the City of Detroit, and they have more than 50 positions in their parks maintenance division they can't fill. Wherever I travel throughout the country, securing labor is a problem. Aside from the pandemic, believe it or not, those in the position of hiring feel one of the major problems is the legalization of marijuana. Potential employees aren't even applying because they won't or can't stop smoking long enough to take a drug test. I understand it is also a major problem in the trucking industry as many drivers with Commercial Driver's Licenses have lost their licenses or let their licenses lapse because they failed, or don't want to take, a drug test. My understanding is that there are seven to eight loads available for every truck in the U.S. If you weren't aware, freight costs in our industry have nearly doubled. For example, a full trailer load of infield conditioner to New Jersey was \$2,800.00 in 2019. The



same load costs \$4,800.00 this fall. That's an increase of \$2.50/bag.

Second is material availability. Many products used in our industry are simply not available, or won't be available for a long time. For example, Triplex ryegrass is not available in New Jersey, and most alternatives have doubled or tripled in price. This will affect sod prices and field quality, because many fields simply won't be overseeded. Additionally, other products – such as field tarps, mats, pitching rubbers, home plates, base sets – are all in short supply.

As an industry we need to do a better job finding future potential sports field managers. We need to get more kids into two- and four-year turf programs, then get them into schools and municipalities. The program going on in Arkansas is a great start.

– *Scott Bills, CSFM, Sports Field Solutions, LLC*

The rise of robotics and battery-powered equipment/tools (pros and cons, as there are plenty of benefits and pitfalls with both). We currently use a small assortment of battery-powered trimmers and blowers. I recently purchased an automower to use on a area of campus that's less than a quarter an acre.

Also training and retaining employees. We are a work-based college (our students work for their tuition). Training is vital to what we do, but it's also difficult to properly train all the students because they all have different class/labor schedules.

With managing both the main campus and our athletic complex, it is difficult to fully train our new students in all that we do throughout the year. Retention is a primary focus to help offset the training of so many new students every year.

– *Eric Harshman, grounds superintendent, Berea College*

The past 19 months have disrupted every aspect of manufacturing, supply chain, and logistics. On top of the disruptions, the demand for products and supplies has skyrocketed due to federal funding and increased revenues for spending.

Manufacturers are months out being able to supply the products and supplies to customers. Commodity pricing has skyrocketed with many doubling, tripling, or even worse. Many manufacturers and suppliers are trying to manage the astronomic increases in costs, and are being forced to take multiple price increases. Logistics for moving products has impeded the ability of manufacturers and suppliers to get the product as expected. For example, air freight items taking up to two weeks, containers waiting months to get offloaded at the port, and over-the-road trucking struggling to get drivers to haul

product. The outlook now for improvement on availability and pricing is anticipated to last well into the fall of 2022 or early 2023.

It is also becoming increasingly difficult to find people to fill open positions in the sports turf industry. There seem to be several circumstances that are contributing to this. The life of a sports turf manager continues to be a “thankless” job. Long hours, increasing workloads, and lack of recognition all contribute to growing stress for many sports turf managers. The work/life balance continues to be stretched, and many are trying to figure out how to juggle their career and families. Another factor is the fact that wages are not increasing at the rate that attracts new sports turf managers into the industry. A look around many communities will show that many, if not all, industries are struggling with labor. Many turfgrass programs continue to struggle to attract new students into their programs, which contributes to a lack of educated sports turf managers to fill open positions.

Product interconnectivity is growing, and electrification is helping advance that. Smart connected products will be the future where machine maintenance and operation will change from a “reactive” to a “proactive” approach. Autonomous products continue to gain interest as labor shortages and advancements in technology improve. Products such as autonomous line painters and mowers are beginning to hit the market. Many communities are facing increasing regional regulations requiring the need to switch their fleets to electric options. A focus on reducing carbon footprint, utilizing “green” technologies, and noise reduction are driving these regional regulations. Battery technology continues to advance as lithium batteries continue to replace lead-acid batteries.

– *Boyd Montgomery, CSE, CSFM, regional business manager, sports fields and grounds, North America, at Toro*

The issues I hear the most are the following:

Labor shortage: How do we get people to want to work in the industry, and how do we keep people?

Stagnant budgets: How can we increase budgets as more is asked of athletic field managers?

Sustainable turfgrass management: Using fewer chemicals, having more natural areas (in parks and high schools), lower nitrogen rates, etc., due to city/school regulations.

– *Adam Thoms, Ph.D., assistant professor specializing in commercial turfgrass management, Iowa State University, Department of Horticulture. **SFM***

*Editor's Note: This is the first in a planned series identifying and discussing various trends in the industry. If you would like to share your insight, please contact John Kmitta at [jkmitta@epgmediallc.com](mailto:jkmitta@epgmediallc.com).*



## Ferris expands stand-on blower line with new FB1000 Hurricane

Ferris, a brand of Briggs & Stratton, is adding to its line of stand-on blowers with a new compact offering, the FB1000 Hurricane. The new unit is the perfect addition for any crew looking to expand its operations to get more done faster than ever before.

While the 35.5-inch overall width of the FB1000 is compact, it does not sacrifice power. Its Vanguard V-Twin engine delivers 18hp. of reliable power. Coupled with a large horizontal impeller, the stand-on blower can provide 3,500 cfm and 150-plus mph of hands-free debris cleaning power at ground speeds of up to eight mph.

Other features of the FB1000 include:

- Patented foot-driven airflow direction control allows operators to keep their hands on the operating controls and maintain productivity.
- A fold-up operator platform is isolated from bumps through polymer platform bumpers making for a more comfortable operating experience.
- The 20 x 8-8 drive tires optimize stability and traction, while the flat-free front caster tires deliver reliable performance on all types of terrain.
- Ergonomic steering controls and simple choke and throttle controls, plus a key-operated start, make the FB1000 intuitive to operate.

The FB1000 Hurricane is available through local Ferris Dealers with an MSRP of just over \$9,000. It joins Ferris Mowers' two other larger stand-on blowers in the Hurricane line, the FB2000 and FB3000, as well as a complete line of spreader/sprayers and commercial lawnmowers.



## Hilltip tailgate-mounted Spray-Striker 65 TR and 90 UTV liquid de-icing sprayers

Hilltip announced its new SprayStriker 65 TR and 90 UTV systems. These tailgate-mounted de-icing sprayers are designed for compact tractors, loaders and UTVs, and allow smaller vehicles to take advantage of Hilltip's SprayStriker technology when spraying pedestrian paths, walkways and other hard-to-reach areas.

The SprayStriker 65 TR and 90 UTV sprayers are powered by 7-gpm, 12V pumps designed for de-icing liquids. They feature high-quality polyethylene tanks and zinc-based, powder-coated mild steel bodies. For more options, they can be equipped with 40-foot hose reels; in-cabin controlled side nozzles to increase spray width; and 2.6-foot, 4-foot or 6.5-foot spray bars.

An Android smartphone comes standard with the SprayStriker 65 TR and 90 UTV sprayers, preloaded with the Hilltip StrikeSmart app. Through the app, users can customize spreading sessions according to the situation. Automatic GPS speed control will adjust the liquid flow (gal/1,000 sq. ft.) based on vehicle speed, or users can manually set a fixed speed through the app. In addition, the app collects and saves essential spreading data.

For maximum control and observation of an equipment fleet, all SprayStriker brine sprayers come standard with Hilltip's exclusive HTrack tracking software. This allows for complete remote tracking and management of all sprayers from a computer, tablet or smartphone. One can monitor treatment routes, vehicle speed, GPS location and material usage in real-time.



## Parker HT-Series Hydraulic Transmission Oil Service Kits

Parker introduced the Hydraulic Transmission Service Kit. The Hydraulic Transmission Service Kit is designed to make routine maintenance simple for Parker HT-Series transmissions. The series includes two kits, one for HTE and HTJ transmissions and another for HTG transmissions. A single kit contains all necessary parts to perform the regularly scheduled maintenance on HTE/HTJ and HTG transmissions.

- Kits include Parker HT-1000 oil, OEM replacement transmission filters, and replacement oil plugs.
- HT-1000 is Parker engineered oil specifically formulated for hydraulic transmissions and exhibits exceptional sheer stability and viscosity over time. HT-1000 provides excellent component wear protection, allowing for extended maintenance intervals up to 1,000 hours.

■ Parker OEM filters, specifically designed for hydraulic transmissions, provide excellent filterability, and minimize filter blockage.

■ HTE/ HTJ Kit part #SK000444 HTG Kit Part #SK000448.

Parker HT-Series Hydraulic Transmission Service kits are available at local outdoor power equipment dealers now. **SFM**



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**Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.cstma.org](http://www.cstma.org)

**Florida #1 Chapter (South):**  
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**Gateway Chapter Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
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**Illinois Chapter STMA:** [www.ILSTMA.org](http://www.ILSTMA.org)

**Intermountain Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
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**Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
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**Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org. (KAFMO/STMA):** [www.kafmo.org](http://www.kafmo.org)

**Mid-Atlantic STMA:** [www.mastma.org](http://www.mastma.org)

**Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association (MiSTMA):** [www.mistma.org](http://www.mistma.org)

**Minnesota Park and Sports Turf Managers Association:** [www.mpstma.org](http://www.mpstma.org)

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**South Carolina Chapter of STMA:**  
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**Tennessee Valley Sports Turf Managers Association (TVSTMA):** [www.tvstma.com](http://www.tvstma.com)

**Texas Sports Turf Managers Association:**  
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## JOHN DEERE



## Fall Armyworms

**Q:** I am currently a bit concerned that we will not be able to accomplish our fall overseeding work this year by October 1 due to the ongoing labor issue and now potential damage from fall armyworms. Would you have any guidance or recommendations for repairing these damaged areas, including dormant seeding?

**A:** The great fall armyworm invasion of 2021 is something for the books, and not something anyone expected. Fall armyworms (FAW) are tropical pests that got carried up to the north on summer storm systems. The adult moths dropped from the skies and laid eggs, which hatched into larvae (caterpillars), which then heartily munched their way through turfgrass leaf tissue on golf courses, sports fields and lawns. The damage was quick, widespread and unexpected. Some turf areas that were treated with insecticides such as Acelepryn in the spring or early summer seem to have avoided damage. Conversely, grasses that we thought might be immune to attack, like turf type tall fescue containing endophytes, were eaten. This will lead to discussions about endophytic grasses and how age of seed and storage methods might affect levels of alkaloids in the turf plant. As I'm writing this, BugDoc (Dr. Dave Shetlar) told me that the FAW larvae have now pupated, with new adults emerging and laying eggs. The cycle from egg to feeding larva is only about 30 days, so we must remain vigilant for round two of FAW damage this fall. Leading up to the first frosts in October, it would be wise to keep an eye on new grass areas to scout for any larval damage, and to possibly apply a low rate of Acelepryn or Tetrino as a curative and future preventive control. If larvae are seen, a liquid application on a pyrethroid product would offer a quick knockdown. Granular products are effective, but need rain or irrigation for activation.

To help the damaged turf recover, protect the turf plant crowns by limiting any kind of mechanical injury (mowing, scarifying, coring etc.) and keeping the crowns hydrated. Avoid the temptation to apply too much fertilizer to turf at this time, as there is research to suggest that the female moths detect areas of lush, fertile turf and lay their eggs accordingly. If damaged turf got very dry and it looks like the crowns will not sufficiently recover, overseeding or slit-seeding may be necessary. October 1 is a sound cut-off date for

seeding to make sure new seedlings are established well before the first frosts, but look at the long-range forecast and maybe push that window a little. Quick-germinating species such as perennial or tetraploid ryegrasses will provide quicker ground cover than turf-type tall fescue, and much quicker ground cover than Kentucky bluegrass. However, it appears that FAW is not feeding on Kentucky bluegrass turf, so plan on using bluegrass seed in damaged areas. If it's too late to do that now, apply it as a dormant seed. If possible, use growth blankets to retain moisture and heat, and to keep people off renovated areas. A growth blanket is one tool that can help save labor, since turf under the blanket needs less frequent watering and other care. Once the window for seed germination has passed, usually around mid to late October, plan to continue renovation efforts in late winter. In February-March 2022, if there is no snow cover, and if weather allows, apply dormant seed to bare/thin spots, using walk-behind equipment that won't cause soil disruption and compaction. During the freezing and thawing cycles in late winter, the soil structure changes due to the swelling and shrinkage of soil particles, the volume of frost-susceptible soils increases, and pores expand due to ice expansion during freezing. These soil pores offer a great opportunity for seed:soil contact. Once the soil temperatures get consistently about 50 degrees Fahrenheit, the seed is in place to germinate. Dormant seeding offers a kick-start to the season, but seed rates should be slightly higher to compensate for any seed loss. Dormant seeding during the "off" season might also offer a benefit to turf managers who are struggling with labor during the busy season. Since infestations of FAW are typically on a 3 to 7-year cycle, it is hoped that we do not have to deal with this again in 2022. However, if the last two years have taught us anything, be prepared for all possibilities! **SFM**



**Pamela Sherratt**

Sports turf extension specialist  
The Ohio State University

### Questions?

Send them to Pamela Sherratt at 202D Kottman Hall, 2001 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210 or [sherratt.1@osu.edu](mailto:sherratt.1@osu.edu)

Or, send your question to Dr. Grady Miller, North Carolina State University, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620, or [grady\\_miller@ncsu.edu](mailto:grady_miller@ncsu.edu)



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