

# SportsField

## MANAGEMENT

December 2024

Vol. 40 No. 12

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

Choosing a Contractor **18** | The Research Playbook **22**

Top Stories of 2024 **28** | Equip Expo Recap **38**

# Keeping Pace

**Walsh Field carries on winning tradition  
with another FOY award for Pace Academy**



**SPORTS FIELD**  
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



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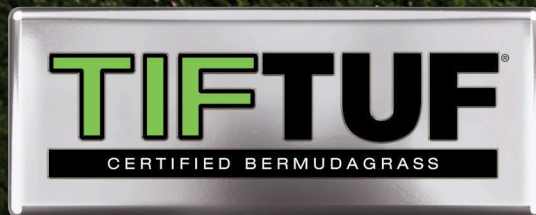
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# Unlock the potential of robotic mowing with Kress

Recent advances in autonomous grass maintenance have transformed the industry, delivering increased efficiency, precision and convenience for healthier grass, reduced labor demand and overall greener lawn care. Kress is positioning themselves at the forefront of this quiet revolution with their cutting-edge, satellite-guided Mission autonomous mowers. For homeowners wanting a pristine lawn or landscaping companies seeking the newest and best technology, Kress Mission autonomous mowers are a game-changer.

## The benefits of robotic mowing

Autonomous mowers encourage healthier, more beautiful grass through frequent mowing, which results in:



lower stress  
on grass  
blades<sup>1</sup>



thicker, more  
resilient turf with  
deeper roots<sup>1</sup>



less  
need for  
watering<sup>2</sup>



less  
need for  
fertilization<sup>3</sup>

Plus, the use of autonomous mowers can save maintenance crews as many as three hours per week<sup>4</sup>, freeing them up to focus on other beautification tasks.

## Elevate your lawn care game



Kress offers a range of autonomous mowing solutions designed to meet diverse lawn care needs – from residential lawns to sports fields, municipalities and golf courses. Lightweight yet powerful, these mowers operate quietly<sup>5</sup>, delivering precision cuts with zero operational emissions. With real-time kinematic (RTK) navigational technology on Kress' proprietary network, they achieve centimeter-level accuracy with no need for boundary wires or onsite antenna, making setup and maintenance easy.

For homeowners and landscaping professionals alike, Kress Mission mowers deliver quality and ease to any landscape. Discover how Kress Mission can work for your property or business by visiting [kress.com](https://kress.com).

<sup>1</sup> Frequent, small cuts result in less stress on grass, especially for warm-season varieties like Bermuda and St. Augustine, which thrive in regions needing regular cutting (Clint Walz, UGA Cooperative Extension).

<sup>2</sup> Grass that is frequently mowed and maintained by autonomous mowers require less watering according to University of Kentucky's study on robotic mowers and turfgrass cut quality (Andrew Hartsock, GCM Online).

<sup>3</sup> Small grass clippings left by robotic mowers decompose quickly and act as a natural fertilizer, helping to avoid thatch buildup. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, these clippings return essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers.

<sup>4</sup> Robotic Mowers save 2 to 3 hours per week during the mowing season, depending on the type of grass according to research by My Take 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Robotic mowers operate at sound levels around 58 to 65 decibels, significantly quieter than traditional gas-powered mowers that can reach up to 75 decibels (PCMag).

**Kress** 

**The only choice for commercial  
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# Editor's Note



**John Kmitta**

Associate Publisher /  
Editorial Brand Director  
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763-383-4405

December inevitably feels like the time to wonder where the year has gone and look back on all that has transpired; and I have been doing a lot of reminiscing lately. My pet project on evenings and weekends is to sift through loads of old family photos and try to finally slot many of them into albums.

The thing about looking back is that we tend to select the best photos — the clear, composed and often selectively posed shots. But it's often the other images that truly tell the story; those random moments when someone was being goofy or was caught unaware. Maybe they were dancing or eating or talking or laughing — or even sad or perturbed. Perhaps they were even a bit out of focus. Those are the snapshots that truly capture life.

Looking back on 2024, what are your snapshots? I'm sure there are plenty of "beauty" shots, with your field ready for play — properly manicured and freshly painted. Maybe it's a memorable sunset over your field after all the work is done, or that moment just before kickoff under the Friday night lights. Perhaps the best moments were from the SFMA Conference or other regional events, when you had a few minutes to hang out with your friends or industry peers.

But the truly key moments in your year were probably less picturesque. A hot summer night when you were

exhausted after a game, and you knew you would be right back there the next morning. Or perhaps covered in paint or dirt, and wondering if anyone will recognize the effort you just invested.

In last month's issue, SFMA President Sun Roesslein, CSFM, mentioned the term "burnout" in her President's Message. And Sun is not the only person I have heard that from in recent months. I get it — the rigors of the job, the long hours, the expectations and scrutiny placed on your work, and the demands on your personal life all take their toll. And I am merely a fly on the wall — the one here to tell your story and chronicle the profession.

For me, 2024 was yet another year in which I met so many amazing sports field management professionals. The kindness and camaraderie extended my way never cease to amaze me. My album of this year is full of new connections, amazing stories and lessons learned.

So, as 2024 winds to a close, I hope you can find the time to step back and reflect on all you have accomplished in the year that has been — even if those moments were challenging, odd, exhausting, frustrating or even a bit of a blur.

Have a safe, relaxing, healthy and happy holiday season. **SFM**

- John

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# President's Message



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### SFMA EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Season's Greetings, SFMA!

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Women's Leadership Academy, put on by our friends at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). There were several great takeaways — one of which lines up really well with one of SFMA's strategic pillars, and it is empowering our future.

The strategic pillar that we have adopted is to "Grow the organization by focusing on integrating the next generation into positions that will ultimately lead to the sports field manager."

At the Women's Leadership Academy, emphasis was placed on mentorship, sponsorship and support for future generations. Did you know SFMA launched a structured mentorship program following our 2024 conference? Thirty people are participating in the inaugural program. I can't wait to see how those relationships build and benefit all participants in the future then, in turn, help to grow our organization. As work slows a bit during the winter, please consider joining the mentorship program next year to help empower the future of SFMA.



**Sun Roesslein, CSFM**

SFMA President

[Sun.Roesslein@jeffco.k12.co.us](mailto:Sun.Roesslein@jeffco.k12.co.us)

While most of our events — from the annual conference to volunteer opportunities — could not happen without sponsor partners, this particular kind of sponsor is the person who supports you when you aren't in the room. Who is standing up for you, backing your expertise and raving about your passion when they are in meetings? I fully believe that having a sponsor or two (or more) will not only enhance your career but also garner respect for your expertise.

It's quite possible that your sponsor or mentor will advocate on your behalf in their meetings with others, or even recommend that you be consulted on the topic at hand. The opportunity to build relationships that evolve to sponsorships is a big part of the SFMA annual conference in January. Registration is open, and early bird pricing ends December 15. Be sure to sign up early to beat the price increase.

I truly hope you enjoy your holiday season. Take good care of yourself this month! **SFM**

*Sun Roesslein, CSFM*





## Register for SFMA Conference now and save

The 36th annual SFMA Conference and Exhibition is just around the corner! Taking place January 13-16, 2025, in Palm Springs, California, attendees will have the opportunity to network with other sports field management industry experts through case studies, hands-on learning, traditional presentations and in-depth sessions.

Connect with fellow professionals, share best practices and build valuable relationships. Explore the latest advancements in sports field management from top exhibitors. Get inspired by tours of Empire Polo Field and West Coast Turf Sod Farms.

Don't miss this chance to connect with the best in the industry! More information is available in the November issue of *SportsField Management* magazine or by visiting <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference/>.

SFMA offers many different types of registration (see chart). If your SFMA membership has lapsed, you can renew during registration to receive a discounted rate.

### 2025 SFMA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION RATES

Full conference registration includes admission to all education sessions, the Welcome Reception, SFMA Awards Banquet, trade show and all meals provided during the conference.

	EARLY BIRD	ONLINE AFTER 12/15
SFMA national member	\$500	\$575
Reduced rate for second member from same facility (must register together to receive reduced rate)	\$450	\$525
Non-member (or student / non-member chapter-only member)	\$650	\$675
One-day package	\$285	\$285
Trade show only	\$75	\$75

## SFMA membership — renew now

The end of the year is here — and that means it's time to renew your SFMA membership. Every year, SFMA works hard to ensure all members avoid interrupted service, support award recipients, and advocate for the benefit of sports fields around the globe. Invoices have been sent to all SFMA members.



SFMA membership is an investment for your future that connects you with a network of peers who are willing to share their time and resources to help you succeed. If you are considering joining SFMA, the recognized leader in information and education for the sports field management industry, here are some benefits to help you save time and advance your career. SFMA is the sports field management industry's leading professional association and provides:

- Access to the Member Only section of the SFMA website with industry information.
- Benefits of Membership newsletters that communicate specific to sports field management.
- Access to the Michigan State University library that houses the world's most extensive turfgrass information website, which has a real-time "Turfgrass Information File."
- Access to the industry's greatest resource for up-to-date information on education, conferences, and more.
- The ability to enter the nationally recognized Field of the Year Awards program.
- Significant savings on registration to SFMA's annual Conference and Exhibition.
- Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) through SFMA's certification program.
- Opportunities to participate in discounts to other organizations' educational conferences, and volunteer leadership positions.
- Annual regional meetings.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (affiliated chapters only).
- The opportunity to join one of SFMA's local chapters for a strong local network — each chapter sets its own local dues.
- Continuing education units (CEUs) for many SFMA educational opportunities.
- Make and meet new clients in your sports field management niche.
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members).

Renew online to avoid missing out on these by logging into your account.

December 31, 2024, is the membership deadline, but you can renew anytime via the website. Questions can be directed to SFMA HQ at 800-323-3875 or [sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org](mailto:sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org).

## New member portal

SFMA launched a brand-new member portal to enhance your online experience. This upgraded platform offers a streamlined design, improved navigation, and enhanced functionality to better serve your needs. This is a completely new system, so your

old login information will no longer work. You'll need to create a new account to access the portal and register for the upcoming conference.

It's quick and easy to get started with the new portal! Just follow these simple steps:

1. Visit the Welcome page: <https://members.sportsfieldmanagement.org/welcome>
2. Set up your account: Follow the on-screen prompts to set up your new username and password.
3. Link your membership: You'll be presented with a list of potential member records or have the option to create a brand-new record if one has not been created in SFMA's old system.
4. Once you've completed these steps, you'll be able to explore all the features of the new portal, including renewing your membership and registering for the 2025 conference.

If you encounter any issues or have questions, visit the following webpage for step-by-step instructions: <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/logging-in-learning-your-landing-page/>. You can also contact SFMA at [sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org](mailto:sfmainfo@sportsfieldmanagement.org) or 800-323-3875.

## 2025 Field Rebuild with Project Evergreen

SFMA announced that the 2025 Volunteer Field Rebuild project will take place at John Williams Field, Field #4, located in DeMuth Park in Palm Springs, California. This initiative, made possible through SFMA's ongoing partnership with Project EverGreen, will bring improvements to the field, ensuring a vibrant, safe and sustainable environment for the community.

Stay tuned for additional updates on the 2025 field rebuild and learn how you can get involved in helping to make a difference.

## SFMA launches Canvas

SFMA launched Canvas, its new learning management system.

To kick things off, SFMA is offering "Turfgrass Management 101" (formerly "Sports Field Management 101"). This course is free for SFMA members and is available for purchase by non-members for \$60.

To access the course:

1. Log in to the new SFMA portal.
2. Go to "Educational Offerings/My Courses/Browse Courses."

SFMA committees are hard at work developing new courses throughout the year, so stay tuned for updates.

The Canvas app is also available for Google Play download and in the Apple Store. **SFM**





## WALSH FIELD

PACE ACADEMY, MABLETON, GEORGIA

The Field of the Year Awards program is made possible by the support of sponsors Carolina Green Corp., Precision Laboratories, John Deere and World Class Athletics.



2022-23 at Walsh Field was truly unique for our crew. We saw the inevitable increase in events and had typical maintenance issues accompanied by some trying weather, but also got the opportunity to host some special external events outside of Pace Academy athletics.

Our sports season started in fall with a lopsided football schedule. We had most of our home games in September and October, which is typically when we plan our overseeding maintenance. This made our job more trying because we had to time our aerification, topdressing and overseeding in a window where our field's aesthetics and playability would not falter. That initial overseed period sets Walsh Field's tone for not only the end of football season, but also for the winter season of flag football, as well as our slate of spring sports.

With flag football ending in early December, we only had a couple of weeks to prepare for our soccer season at Walsh Field, which was made extra difficult by below-freezing temperatures we encountered for multiple days in a row. To avoid irrigation issues we have encountered in the past, we drained our irrigation lines and insulated all of our valve boxes to mitigate damage.

Following our spring soccer season, we had another short window to prepare for Newcastle United to train at our facilities. We only had a month to convert our overseeded soccer pitch back to solely bermudagrass. This meant we had to expedite our maintenance plan by a couple of weeks and push our grow-in to ensure Newcastle had a professional playing surface they felt comfortable training on. During their week-long training sessions, we encountered yet another hurdle from Mother Nature as it rained more than three inches in a matter of 24 hours. Luckily, our crew's hard work in preparation leading up to their arrival as rewarded, and they did not have to alter any training plans.

Our main goal each year is to provide the safest and best-looking field we possibly can for our student athletes and any other athletes that train on Walsh Field. We accomplish this by strategically planning our maintenance, being able to adjust to all weather-related hurdles and added events, and ultimately through our work ethic and drive.

— Daniel Prince, Riverview facilities manager







**Level and category of submission:** Schools & Parks Soccer

**Field manager:** Daniel Prince

**Title:** Riverview facilities manager

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture

**Experience:** I began working at the University of Georgia's (UGA) Athletic Association in 2010 as a student worker, helping maintain Sanford Stadium and the Jack Turner women's sports complex. During my senior year at UGA, I ran a crew of fellow student workers as we hosted a regional and super regional for women's college softball. After graduation, I stayed on as a full-time foreman and was responsible for the softball and soccer complexes for UGA. I then took a job at Georgia Tech where I held the titles of softball field manager, baseball field manager, and eventually assistant sports turf manager. We hosted the inaugural season of Atlanta United at Georgia Tech's Bobby Dodd Stadium and also won Field of the Year for football that year. I then got the opportunity to be Pace Academy's sports facility manager.

**Full-time staff:** Larry Fricke

**Original construction:** 2014

**Turfgrass:** Certified 419 bermudagrass

**Rootzone:** Sand

**Drainage system:** 4" Sand cap with 12" perforated drains. We also have ACO drains lining two sides of the field.



# IT'S TIME AGAIN...

## We're seeking nominations for the 2025 Rising Star Awards!

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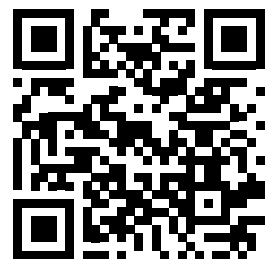
### Do you know someone who...

- ★ Is just getting started in the sports field management profession?
- ★ Under the age of 40 or worked in the industry for less than 10 years?
- ★ Has made a huge impact?

**Questions?** Email [jkmitta@epgacceleration.com](mailto:jkmitta@epgacceleration.com) with "Rising Star" in the subject.



### NOMINATE TODAY!



SCAN for the nomination form





**Prince:** Probably just the amount of maintenance that was done. We typically are able to do more now that I'm here. If we get a break in the game schedule, I can go ahead and aerify the field or roll it if it needs to be rolled. I probably put out more fertilizer than they did. They did a lot of granulars because they had a lot of fields to take care of in different complexes; we do a lot more foliar. During game weeks, when weather and schedules allow, we typically try to spray once or twice before each home football game. I probably put out more rye than they did. We overseed, and we play most of our games on ryegrass. The first couple of games of the football season are played on bermudagrass. Then, from fall to beginning of summer, it's all ryegrass.

**SportsField Management (SFM):** You have been at Pace Academy for a little more than five years, and this is your fifth Field of the Year win (four for Walsh Field and one for your auxiliary/lacrosse field). When you first arrived at Pace Academy, what was the state of the fields and what did you do differently to get your fields to this level of performance and quality?

**Daniel Prince:** When I started here, a company called Precision Turf, which built the fields in 2014, took care of all the big maintenance tasks, such as aerification, topdressing and fertilization — everything but mow the fields. Pace ultimately wanted somebody in-house to do the work whenever needed and not be on a company's schedule. But the fields were in good shape when I got here. Precision did a great job, and I just tried to build on what they had going and put my own little spin on it.

**SFM:** Did you change or implement anything with regard to maintenance practices?

**SFM:** From the time that you won your first Field of the Year Award at Pace Academy in 2019 until now, has there been much that you've changed in terms of your approach?

**Prince:** We try to stay consistent. Since that first win, we've added more events and sports. We added flag football a couple years ago. We started doing graduations out here, which they had not done previously. We have hosted Premier League soccer teams the last two years, and that is something they want to keep going. During COVID we had professional athletes out here when their facilities were closed. With additional events and more use there are changes to scheduling around those events — pushing our maintenance back or a little bit earlier depending on when they're here. But, overall, we try to keep it consistent.

**SFM:** With the change in event load, how much input do you get in terms of in terms of the events that are added to your schedule?





**Prince:** I'm involved before the teams arrive. They want to know what we've done, what the fields are like, what our fertility programs are and our maintenance schedules before they come out to use our facilities. They want to make sure that it's up to par for their athletes to play and practice on it. So I'm involved in that a good bit. Pace really prides itself on having this nice, big complex out here. It's secluded enough to where teams want to come out here because it's private. We're here to make it as best as it can be year round.

**SFM:** Is the increase in sports and events typically your biggest challenge?

**Prince:** I would say so. We're getting into this realm of sports where they want to be out here all the time. Everybody's always working on getting better and practicing — it's a year-round thing. So that's a little bit tough for us. We're lucky enough that in the fall we don't have a lot of practices out here, so it gives us time to get all that situated. In the spring they're out here practicing all the time. With the addition of all the soccer events, it's been a little more difficult to schedule stuff. But it makes it more fun for us because it's not the same thing year after year. We get to work with different teams and different organizations. We've done Premier League a couple times, and they're trying to make that a yearly thing where they come over for an American tour. Copa America came up and they contacted us about using the fields. It makes it difficult but fun and exciting for us.

**SFM:** Please tell us about your fields and facilities and the overall scope of your duties.

**Prince:** We have a softball complex that is completely artificial. Our baseball field infield is artificial, the outfield is 419 bermudagrass, and it has a gravel warning track. Those two fields are the only two artificial playing surfaces that we have. Then we have Walsh Field, which is the stadium field; and our auxiliary field, which is basically lacrosse, some middle school soccer, and some early flag football games.

My duties are to take care of the whole complex. There's an indoor batting cage and locker room for softball and baseball. There's a baseball building with restrooms and concession stand. The stadium has locker rooms, bathrooms and concession stand. It's mostly me and Larry Fricke who take care of the complex out





here. We do parking on game days for football and for graduation. We take care of all the field work and some of the exterior landscaping. We also go over to the school whenever we need to do maintenance over there. They have a pretty large grass practice field that fits about a football field and a half, as well as a smaller soccer practice field. We oversee there and I maintain those fields as needed. But we are usually out here at their sports complex, which is about 15 to 20 minutes from the school.

I do most of the field work myself, and Larry assists if I need help painting or with other tasks. But he handles a lot of the facilities and anything external, such as the surrounding grass areas. My main focus is the complex as a whole, but the majority of the time is spent taking care of the fields and making sure they're ready for our student athletes.

**SFM:** What originally attracted you to this job?

**Prince:** I got out of college sports turf because it was a lot of hours. I was getting married and we wanted to start a family. I knew the hours I was working wouldn't allow me to have the time I would want with my wife and kids. We now have three kids that are all under three years old. Trying to find that balance between work life and home life was really important. Pace Academy has been great.

**SFM:** Can you share a bit of insight into the Field of the Year application process and anything other sports field managers should know?

**Prince:** I don't think people realize all the work that you have to put into the submission. I knew going into the first one I submitted because we won one at Georgia Tech when I was there. So I knew the process and knew what information you had to have. And that information can't necessarily come in September and October. You need to document everything with pictures throughout the year. Every year, about three weeks before it's due, it's crunch time around here. **SFM**





## JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



### CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

**PROBLEM:**

Circle of thatch on top of turf

**TURFGRASS AREA:**

Multipurpose high school field

**LOCATION:**

Southeastern United States

**TURFGRASS VARIETY:**

419 bermudagrass

*Answer on page 33*

*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*

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# Building Relationships

*How to choose the right contractor*

Photo courtesy of SCG Fields, LLC

By Mary Helen Sprecher

Maybe you have a greater demand for fields thanks to the growth of sports like lacrosse, flag football or even cricket. Perhaps the powers that be have decided to upgrade the playing surface. Maybe some changes such as drainage or irrigation are needed, and you want to make sure they are done correctly. No matter the reason, the upshot is that you need a contractor — and not just any contractor, but one who understands and specializes in sports field construction.

After all, you understand what goes into keeping the field performing at its best, so it's only natural to expect the same kind of knowledge from the professional who will be building or renovating the field.

Because sports field construction is a highly specialized area, any contractor chosen should be familiar with current products and construction techniques, as well as with the type of surface to be installed and with the standards promulgated by various governing bodies. While the athletes and spectators may see the final product and the playing surface, the construction of the base and drainage beneath the surface may be just as important to the overall system.

In most cases, public projects are bid out, begin with a request for proposal (RFP) or provide a proposal. By crafting the RFP, it is possible to help narrow the field in order to pre-qualify or qualify the sports field contractor. (Note: The intent is not to restrict the number of bidders, but to restrict the number of bidders to only those who are experienced in constructing quality sports field projects and who have the proper equipment, financial stability, insurance and capacity to bond a project.)

Some key pre-qualification documents include the General Services Administration (GSA) Form 527 – Contractor's Qualifications and Financial Information or the AIA's form A305 Contractor's Qualification Statement. Both provide the ability to learn more about prospective bidders, to identify previous projects similar to the planned project and to examine the qualifications of the individuals who would be involved in the project if the company were chosen.

Another means of finding a sports-field-specific contractor is to contact the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). As the trade association for sports facility builders, designers and suppliers of materials





*Photo courtesy of HNP LLC*

and equipment, ASBA can provide a free online listing of its members, including contractors who specialize in this type of construction ([www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org), then “Find a Member”).

After winnowing the field of potential contractors down to those who have more experience, the next step in the selection process comes in the form of asking questions. The first involves doing research on previous projects similar to your proposed project. Any contractor should be able to provide references. Find those who own and manage projects similar to yours, and that have been given as references by the companies responding to the RFP. Some key questions include: What was the contractor like to work with overall? Was the job completed on time? Did the job meet expectations? Were there any hidden costs? Was the contractor able to solve any problems arising during construction? Have there been any post-construction problems and if so, has the builder been responsive in addressing them? How does the field look and how does it play?

ASBA offers a voluntary certification program for contractors. In field construction, contractors may earn the designation of Certified Field Builder (CFB) by demonstrating experience in sports field construction, and by successfully passing an exam on key aspects of sports field design and construction. In some cases, contractors choose to pursue certification in specific surfaces; for this reason, ASBA offers certifications programs for CFB-N (for those whose work concentrates in natural grass fields)

and CFB-S (for those who specialize in synthetic surfaces.) Another certification which may come into play is that of Certified Track Builder (CTB).

“One important but often overlooked item to consider when you’re looking to build a field and interviewing companies is, first, to ask, ‘Do you have an ASBA Certified Field Builder on staff?’” said Robert J. Cohen, CFB, CTB, of Robert Cohen Co., LLC Sport Surfaces Distributing, Inc., Bernalillo, New Mexico. “Request a list of three to four recent projects with contact names, emails and phone numbers, and contact them for references. The best reference to ask for is one where there was a warranty issue and to find out how it was handled and resolved.”

Field/facility owners also should consider the following: Does the contractor have the necessary insurance and bonding capacity? How many years has the company been in business? If it is a relatively new company, what is the work experience of its principals? How many fields have they built? Were they responsible for the complete project or only specific aspects of the job (surface, drainage, site work, etc.)?

In addition, ask about the contractor’s insurance and whether there have been any major accidents or claims against the builder? Also find out if the company is certified or accredited by, or a member of, a trade organization.

Even if construction materials and methods are identical and items included in the contract are consistent, look beyond price when comparing proposals. Quality construction is a good value for the dollars invested. Choosing on low bid alone is often not cost effective.

Compare proposed construction schedules, progress payments and, of course, guarantees and warranties. Understand what is included in any guarantee (materials, workmanship or both) and for how long.





*Photo courtesy of Geo Surfaces*



*Photo courtesy of Peacock Services, LLC*



*Photo courtesy of Peacock Services, LLC*

Rank the proposals and then attempt to negotiate a contract with the first choice builder. While price is not the only consideration, if the bid of the preferred contractor seems high, ask the contractor to review the bid and ask for clarification on the higher figure.

When offering a public bid, it is extremely important to ensure the products to be used and the methods of construction are equivalent to your specifications. Everything specified should be included in the contract price; this might include responsibility for permits, site preparation, electric power, taxes, insurance, removal and replacement of landscaping and restoration of disturbed areas.





Photo by S. Tsuchiya on Unsplash

Once a contractor has been chosen, confirm the agreement in writing. The contract documents, signed by both the owner and contractor, should be as clear, detailed and as specific as possible. A final set of drawings and specifications accounting for any addendums or negotiated revisions should be referenced in the final contract. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). For more information, visit [www.sportsbuilders.org](http://www.sportsbuilders.org)  
 Note: An essential component of contractor selection should be the decision of how the project is to be bid out and delivered. For discussions of various delivery methods, such as design/build, design/bid/build, negotiated agreement, construction management firm and cooperative purchasing agreements (among others), see "Project Delivery Methods: Know Your Options," in the May 2024 issue of SportsField Management.

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# Multi-state Study Offers Recommendations for Keeping Bermudagrass Greener All Season

By Nick Kordsmeier, with contributions from Marya Barlow and Tobie Blanchard

Whether it's a football field, golf course or home lawn, a new multi-state study offers recommendations for keeping some varieties of turfgrass greener, longer.

Researchers based in six states collaborated to identify three simple management tips to extend green color and reduce cold-weather injury in hybrid bermudagrass. Recommendations include raising the mowing height, applying nitrogen fertilizer in the fall and, most importantly, maintaining adequate soil moisture in the lead-up to a short-term freeze event, such as a springtime cold snap.

The study, "Improving winter survival of interspecific hybrid bermudagrass in the Mid-Atlantic region through cultural practices," was published in the *Crop, Forage & Turfgrass Management* journal in August.

Wendell Hutchens, Ph.D., co-author of the study and an assistant professor of turfgrass science with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, noted that although the work focused on golf courses, the recommendations could apply equally in other situations.

"The practices can be used universally," said Hutchens. "Sod growers can use the same practices, as can sports field managers and homeowners for their lawns."

Sports field managers, Hutchens added, may benefit the most from this study. Much of the work for golf courses was done on fairway-height bermudagrass, which he said is "usually comparable to sports fields."

"Many of our turfgrass professionals manage hybrid bermudagrasses throughout the Mid-Atlantic; winter injury is one of their biggest concerns," said David McCall, Ph.D., co-author of the study and associate professor of turfgrass pathology and precision management in Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "This multi-state project was designed to answer some practical questions that would benefit our industry stakeholders."

According to the study, hybrid bermudagrass is susceptible to cold-weather damage in the transition zone, an area that includes a band from Maryland and Virginia on the East Coast to Arkansas, parts of Missouri



**David McCall, Ph.D.**

and Oklahoma, all the way to California on the West Coast. While the study highlights the Mid-Atlantic region, the work is relevant for anywhere in the transition zone, Hutchens added.

"The transition zone is where cool and warm climates meet," said Hutchens. "That's where we can grow every species of turfgrass — warm season and cool season — but they all struggle to some degree. And that provides ample research opportunities."

In addition to Hutchens and McCall, other co-authors of the study include Joseph Doherty, former graduate student at the University of Maryland; Joseph Roberts, Ph.D., associate professor with Clemson University's College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences; Eric DeBoer, assistant professor with the LSU AgCenter in Louisiana; Jordan Booth, Ph.D., senior director of the U.S. Golf Association's course consulting service; and Michael Battaglia, graduate student at the University of Arkansas' Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences.

## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FIELD TRIALS

Hutchens said the research team set out to evaluate the effects of soil fertility, mowing height and soil moisture to avoid cold-weather injury, also known as winterkill.





**Wendell Hutchens, Ph.D.**

“Those are three primary management practices for turfgrass, but particularly with winterkill, they play a major role,” he said. “We found some pretty interesting data during the first couple of years of our study.”

Roberts noted that, historically, avoiding late-summer applications of nitrogen on bermudagrass was the standard.

“Healthy roots are vital to winter survival, and it was thought that fall fertilization could favor lush foliar growth in lieu of root growth, therefore increasing chances of winter injury,” said Roberts. “However, our research showed that slow-release nitrogen applications through mid-September had either no impact or, in some cases, positive impacts on turfgrass quality and color.”

“More importantly, no negative impacts were

observed as a result of late-season nitrogen applications,” he added.

According to Hutchens, the work with mowing height also yielded an interesting insight.

“Mowing height didn’t have a substantial effect on winterkill, but it did reduce winter weed populations when we mowed at higher heights, which is a really useful finding and a



**Joseph Roberts, Ph.D.**



serendipitous takeaway from the study,” he said.

“The general rule of thumb is to increase mowing heights slightly as bermudagrass approaches winter dormancy,” said McCall. “How much depends on the starting point while actively growing in-season.”

“In our study, 0.75 inches seemed to be the sweet spot, though we did not see consistent impacts of mowing height on winter injury. We did, however, notice that mowing lower at 0.5 inches opened the canopy enough for weeds to germinate much more frequently, and mowing at 1 inch sometimes slowed spring green up a little,” he said.

McCall noted that these mowing heights are considerably lower than how a home lawn should be maintained.

### **SOIL MOISTURE IS CRITICAL**

Due to mild and wet winter conditions at the field trial locations in Maryland and Virginia, the researchers performed several experiments using freeze chambers to mimic winter weather conditions. When Hutchens started his job in Arkansas, he worked with Battaglia and DeBoer to evaluate the relationship between soil water content and level of cold-weather injury.

DeBoer, who mainly participated in the study as a Ph.D. student at the University of Arkansas before taking up his post with the LSU AgCenter, said the research found a strong association between soil moisture and winterkill symptoms.

“There is definitely a positive correlation with increased soil moisture prior to short-term freezing events, resulting in better turf survival,” DeBoer said.

One possible explanation according to DeBoer may be a temporary heating effect from the irrigation water



**Eric DeBoer**

buffering the roots from cold temperatures. DeBoer cautioned there is a high degree of variability from year to year and site to site.

"It's not cut and dry, say, to irrigate your soil to 25 percent volumetric water content before a freeze, and you'll be fine," DeBoer said. "The idea is to avoid having droughty soil before a freezing event."

According to Hutchens, volumetric water content is a measurement of how much water a given volume of soil contains. The amount of water that a field can hold depends on the type of soil, Hutchens noted.

"Adequate soil moisture is certainly one of the most crucial management practices to reduce winterkill," he said.

### REAPING REWARDS FROM COLLABORATION

Hutchens noted that the multi-state collaboration was a key part of the success of this study.

"You get a lot of different ideas and perspectives," he said. "This project demonstrates that these collaborative efforts across multiple universities can be really successful. It takes a lot of legwork to organize it all, and the initial work is challenging, but the rewards that you reap from it are totally worth it."

Hutchens said the team began the work in 2019 while he was a graduate student at Virginia Tech, working under McCall as his adviser. Booth was working as a research associate at Virginia Tech at the time before joining USGA. Doherty was a graduate student at the University of Maryland working under Roberts, who later took a job at Clemson University. DeBoer and Battaglia got involved when Hutchens moved to Arkansas in 2022.

"This project exemplifies the benefits of collaboration, as the primary study was performed at three geographically unique locations in the Mid-Atlantic," said McCall. "By bringing in additional resources from northwest Arkansas, we were truly able to use broad

strokes for practical recommendations to turfgrass professionals throughout the transition zone with confidence that our results apply across the board."

In addition to the value of the research team's collective experience, Roberts also noted the added value of testing recommendations across multiple geographical areas.

"Collaborative efforts not only helped push this research forward, but performing field research across multiple field sites in different states enhanced the recommendations offered to growers across the transition zone," said Roberts.

This study was supported in part by grants from the Old Dominion Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Eastern Shore Association of Golf Course Superintendents, the Mid-Atlantic Sports Turf Managers Association, the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents, and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Environmental Institute for Golf.

The Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Virginia Tech, Clemson University and the LSU AgCenter are part of a system of agricultural research centers at land-grant universities in the southern United States where scientists collaborate to conduct research and outreach focused on conserving the region's natural resources and sustainably feeding a growing global population. **SFM**

*Nick Kordsmeier is director of communications at the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, U of A System Division of Agriculture. The Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station is the research arm of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. To learn more, visit <https://aaes.uada.edu/> or <https://uada.edu/>.*

*Marya Barlow is a writer with the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Communication and Marketing Department.*

*Tobie Blanchard is director, communications and public relations at the LSU AgCenter.*

The Crop, Forage & Turfgrass Management journal is a production of The American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America. To view Improving winter survival of interspecific hybrid bermudagrass in the Mid-Atlantic region through cultural practices visit <https://acsess.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cft.20303>.



# We've Always Done it That Way

The 2025 Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Conference is just around the corner, and I'm excited for conversations to be had with familiar and new people alike. I'm also reminded of past conversations, and if I had a dollar for every story that included "we've always done it that way"... well, you get the picture. Our industry is rooted in tradition, where many techniques and practices have been handed down from one crew to the next. However, although time-tested methods hold value, an unwavering commitment to them can inhibit innovation, growth and efficiency.

The bon mot of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result." Whether you're the identified leader or not, the larger question must be, "what is the collateral damage of continuing to do it the way we've always done it?"

When done well, the "we've always done it that way" mindset is a system that passes down valuable skills and techniques from experienced professionals to new team members, setting clear expectations for results and building practical expertise. But the downside emerges when these habits harden into a resistance to change. In sports field management, this resistance can arise from fear of the unknown, fear of failure or even the inconvenience of shifting away from a comfortable routine.

Fear in our line of work is rooted in our drive to avoid making mistakes or disrupting schedules. Delays and errors can attract unwanted attention and complaints from fans, players and officials — putting sports field management crews under pressure to maintain their reputation. Nobody enjoys reading fan comments about a game delayed due to issues related to field preparation, such as repainting a 130-foot foul line that was four inches to the right of the outfield foul line. Yes, I painted it on the wrong side of the string (true story). While it's understandable to want to avoid risk, clinging to old ways simply for their familiarity can have collateral damage.

A fear-based environment, where not making mistakes dominates a team's approach, stifles quality and limits creativity and performance. In sports field management, where the smallest detail can impact safety and field conditions, teams must be prepared to act with confidence and adapt to situations that arise. Fear of messing up creates rigidity that can demotivate the team, create a tense work environment and limit problem-solving capabilities.

Team members who grow to fear change are more likely to retreat from learning new skills. A culture of hesitancy can become the norm, with this same fear passed on to new team members. When employees continue with outdated techniques, they miss the chance to expand their skill sets and adapt to advancements in technology. This can limit not only their growth but also their overall value to the team and the sports field management industry.

The annual SFMA Conference is designed to be a resource for learning. Adapting something observed or learned through continuing education may cause change, but the stamina to overcome the challenges related to change has an impact that builds skill and confidence within the team. The long-term effect is a culture that values continuous improvement, which encourages employees to keep learning, and builds confidence and resiliency. Sports field managers who embrace change influence their team's desire to meet current industry standards and ensure that their skills stay relevant.

Clinging to outdated methods can be a hit to team culture. Team members who are consistently told to follow the old ways may feel robotic. Over time, this dynamic can lead to frustration, complacency and turnover, as workers seek employment that values growth.

Teams that celebrate small wins and encourage new methods tend to boost morale and job satisfaction. Effective dialogue shows employees they are valued, and can spark pride and ownership of work. When team members participate in decisions about adopting new techniques, they are more likely to embrace and support changes.

By recognizing the collateral damage of clinging to old ways, you can adopt a culture that emphasizes continuous improvement, encourages growth and improves efficiency. Change may come with challenges, but in an evolving industry, adaptability and innovation are crucial for ensuring long-term success. **SFM**



*Alpha Jones, CSFM, is director of field operations for the Fayetteville Woodpeckers, MiLB affiliate of the Houston Astros. He also serves on the SFMA Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer.*





# Hands-on Experience

*High school students leading the way on community field renovation projects*

**All photos provided by Dave Gossman**

Students from the Turf/Field class at Atwater High School (Atwater, California) recently teamed up with students from Golden Valley High School (Merced, California) and experts from West Coast Turf for a City of Atwater field renovation project.

Students from both programs were able to tour West Coast Turf's facilities prior to renovating two city softball fields. Renovations included removing a large infield/outfield hump, laser grading infields, resetting base anchors and installing sod.

"The primary objective is to expose high school students to, and get them excited about, the opportunities available in the turfgrass and sports field management profession," said Dave Gossman, Atwater High School agriculture instructor, FFA advisor, and department chair.

Gossman began his career as a dolphin trainer working in Hawaii, Tahiti and Bermuda before deciding to "pay it forward" and becoming a high school agriculture teacher. For the past 23 years, he has been teaching at Atwater, a school of 2,100 students from an 80-plus-percent socioeconomically challenged and diverse population.

During his time at Atwater, Gossman has helped to grow the agriculture program from 250 agriculture students to more than 1,200 students — making it one of the largest agriculture programs in the nation.

However, it wasn't until 2019, and the STMA Conference in Phoenix, that Gossman was exposed to the opportunities the sports field management profession had to offer.

"Being an agriculture teacher, I saw the direct connection to agriculture — soil, turf and irrigation," he said. "I became enthused because I felt like I had discovered an untapped niche in the horticulture/agriculture pathway that I could open and create at my high school as a course for students."

In 2019, Gossman submitted California's first "Turfgrass and Sports Field Management" course within the state's Agriculture/Horticulture CTE pathway. Utilizing SFMA certification and education topics as a resource, he developed a course that continues to expand.

Gossman credits much of the growth and success of the Atwater program to SFMA members and industry professionals, including Marc Moran, CSFM, Atlee High School and Drew Miller, Brentsville Turfgrass Management





Program, who have served as mentors. In addition, the Arizona State University grounds crew, Kevin Denny (White Sox), Glen Aveson (Dodgers), Eric Roberts (Rangers/Royals), Juan Favela USC) and others have opened their doors and provided Gossman with knowledge and enthusiasm he can share with his students.

“Our course involves being outdoors in the fall and focusing on safety and tool/equipment operation,” said Gossman. “We then focus on curriculum and turf/field maintenance skills. We utilize the winter on more knowledge base learning followed by turf/field renovation and maintenance skills during the spring utilizing our school athletic fields as a lab. This past year, we have expanded into community projects, with students taking part in community field renovations. All of these have been in partnership with companies such as Toro, West Coast Turf and Garton Tractor.”

With the success of the Atwater High School Turf/Field class, Gossman's goal has been to market and promote the opportunities within the profession to other state and national high school agriculture programs. That includes Golden Valley High School, which introduced the course in 2023 and has grown to two sections and more than 70 students in only its second year.

“I was excited to learn about the opportunity Dave has brought to Atwater High's FFA program and now its expansion to Golden Valley High School,” said Kristina Gardner, recreation supervisor for the City of Atwater. “As a former t-ball player, an Atwater High alumnus and a mother of three children who have played at Osborn Park, partnering with Dave and his class to enhance the maintenance of the fields was a natural fit.

“Sports play a significant role in our lives, yet many do not realize the extensive work involved in maintaining fields to ensure they are safe and aesthetically pleasing,” Gardner added. “During my discussions with some of the high school students who participated in the work, it was evident that



they were thrilled to gain valuable hands-on experience. The availability of a turf education program in our local area is remarkable. In my opinion, we need more hands-on experiences such as this class to continue supporting the next generation.”

Said Gossman, “I am a big believer that if you get a high school student confident and excited in something, they will do what it takes to pursue and do it. That's my goal as an educator within this career opportunity.” **SFM**

**Note:** On January 14, 2025, from 12:45-1:45 p.m. at the SFMA Conference in Palm Springs, California, Gossman, along with Marc Moran, Chandler Neal and Lati Sehon, will present “iCEV Workshop – Expanding Turfgrass Courses In High Schools with SFMA Curriculum and Certification.” This presentation will showcase the development and expansion of high school turf/field programs within agriculture education; the introduction of new SFMA high school curriculum and industry certification through iCEV; and the vision moving forward to expand, strengthen and expose high school students to the industry and as an industry pipeline for future employees/leaders within the turf/sports field profession.



# 2024 Most-read Articles

With 2024 coming to a close, we look back at the top stories of 2024. Below you will find the most-read stories on *SportsFieldManagementOnline.com* this year. We have broken it down into categories to highlight the top 10 feature stories, news items and product announcements of the year.

## FEATURES

### **PURE LIVE SEED: DOES IT REALLY MATTER?**

Rapid establishment of a dense, persistent turf from seed relies on planting a viable optimal target seedling density. Target seeding rates, however, vary by individual species and seed size. Cale Bigelow, Ph.D., examined target seeding rate, as well as another important but often overlooked factor that must be considered to achieve your target planting density. That factor is pure live seed, the percent of the desired species in the seed bag that is actually viable and most likely to establish under optimal field conditions.

### **THE HISTORY AND BEST PRACTICES FOR INFIELD TOPDRESSINGS**

In the 1960s, groundskeepers began incorporating different products into their infield skins to try to improve playability. These products initially consisted of diatomaceous earth, porous ceramics and even crushed corn cobs. They were referred to as amendments or conditioners because the products were typically blended into the infield profile. In this article, Luke Yoder and Paul Zwaska took a deep dive into the history and best practices of infield topdressings.



## **Q&A WITH DR. GRADY MILLER:**

### **WINTER FIELD WORK DOS AND DON'TS**

Grady Miller, Ph.D., answered the following question: "Now that our fields are dormant for the winter, we have more time to tackle field maintenance and projects that we could not get to during the summer and fall. Is there anything that we should not do now?"

## **MORE THAN GRASS WITH ALPHA JONES:**

### **PROFESSIONALISM IN SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT**

Thanks to dedicated networks and social media platforms, sports are in the public eye 24/7. This visibility increases the need for meticulous maintenance to ensure field integrity for playability and safety. As a result, the demands on sports field managers (SFMs) are growing significantly, making it vital to preserve and improve the reputation of SFMs. Alpha Jones, CSFM, detailed how professionalism is a step in the right direction.

## **FINISH AND SURFACE GRADE:**

### **POSITIVE DRAINAGE PATTERNS**

This excerpt from the Ballfield Design & Dimensions Guide, Fourth Edition, presented by Beacon Athletics and DuraEdge, shared why no other portion of a ballfield construction or renovation project has more impact on the success of your facility than the finish grade and the resulting surface drainage pattern.

## **CRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE RFP FOR SPORTS FIELD PROJECTS**

Crafting a request for proposal (RFP) when it comes to having work done on your field can set the stage for success throughout the project. That's why it is essential to put in the work in advance. Mary Helen Sprecher showed





how RFPs, when correctly presented, give prospective vendors everything they need to know; and result in proposals that cover all the work you want performed.

### Q&A WITH DR. GRADY MILLER: RECOVERY

Grady Miller, Ph.D., answered the following question: “Our city wants to host more multiple-day travel tournaments on top of our heavy weekday schedules. Do you have any tips to improve recovery so we can sustain this additional wear and keep our field standards high?”

### PAMELA SHERRATT ON SUBMITTING DIGITAL PICTURES FOR DIAGNOSIS

When it comes to dead or brown grass, diagnosing the issue and making corrective measures based on photos of the issue can be challenging. Pamela Sherratt provided tips for digitally submitting pictures and questions to your local turf Extension team.

### ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR YOUR FIELD

People may only think about natural environments when they hear the word “ecology;” however, the term describes the complex web of interactions that exist among different plants and organisms and the environment in which they live. Paul Johnson, Ph.D., outlined ecological principles to help find new and creative solutions to the ever-changing problems in athletic field management.



### THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

The next generation of sports field managers is vital to the continuous growth of the industry, which is why it is important to understand their perspective. Jakob Scales detailed the results of a survey conducted of

people new to the sports field management industry (or still in school for a turfgrass-related degree).



### NEWS

#### NICK PAPPAS SHOWS OFF SUPER BOWL LVIII FIELD

NFL Field Director Nick Pappas showed off the innovative technology that goes into the natural grass playing surface in preparation for Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas.



#### GEORGE TOMA RELEASES NEW BOOK

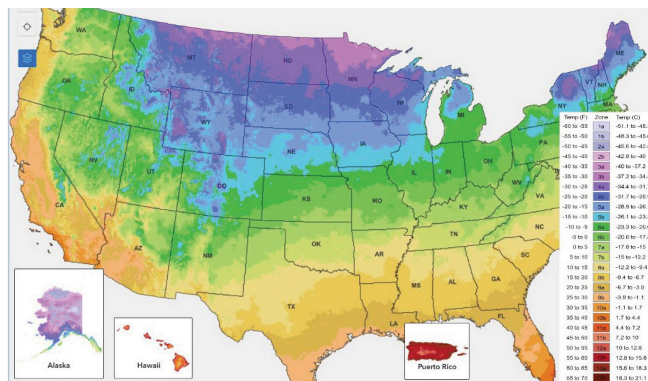
George Toma, the pride of Kansas City, launched a new book with author Craig Handel, titled “The Sodfather,” which chronicles Toma’s 80-year career.

#### USDA UNVEILS UPDATED PLANT HARDINESS ZONE MAP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a new version of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM), updating this valuable tool for gardeners and researchers for the first time since 2012. USDA’s



Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location.



### SFMA ANNOUNCES CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Board of Directors on May 23 announced a change in association leadership, and decided not to renew the contract of its CEO, Laura Simmons, MBA, CAE. The move was announced via a letter to members from SFMA President Sun Roesslein, CSFM.

### SFMA MOWING PATTERNS CONTEST WINNING DESIGN

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) announced the winner of the 2023 SFMA Mowing Patterns Contest. The winning design was submitted by Dakota Steele, district groundskeeper at Fairfield Community Schools in Goshen, Indiana.



### A-LIST LAUNCHES APPROVED SOD PROGRAM

The Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf (A-LIST) announced the launch of its A-LIST Approved Sod Program, an initiative designed to certify and promote sod grown on farms using a minimum of 65% A-LIST approved grasses. This program establishes a standard for sustainability and high quality in turfgrass management.

### NCS4 PUBLISHES INDUSTRY RESEARCH REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL SPORTS VENUE SECURITY

NCS4 published an industry research report on professional sports venue security issues, emerging threats and technology solutions. Information gleaned from this study will assist venue security directors in planning and policy development, venue operations and technology utilization.

### RED SOX SENIOR DIRECTOR OF GROUNDS DAVID MELLOR RETIRES

David Mellor, senior director of grounds for the Boston Red Sox, retired Sunday, September 29, following the Red Sox season finale. Mellor announced his retirement via Instagram, during which he stated, in part, "With mixed emotions I'm stepping back from my daily responsibilities as Senior Director of Grounds for the Boston Red Sox."

### MEET THE 2024 SFMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The SFMA announced its 2024 Board of Directors during the 35th annual Conference and Exhibition held in Daytona Beach, Florida. The board officially took office January 24 at the Annual Meeting.

### SFMA PAUSES CEO SEARCH

The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) on October 16 announced that it is suspending its search for a new CEO until after its 2025 conference and exhibition.

### PRODUCTS

#### HUSQVARNA UNVEILS NEW AUTOMOWER 520 MODELS

Husqvarna introduced a new Automower that it says is ideal for landscapers and groundskeepers "looking for a more affordable (entry-level) wire-free robotic solution to help them manage commercial properties efficiently."

#### KIOTI EXPANDS TRACTOR LINE WITH RX40

Kioti Tractor, a division of Daedong-USA, Inc., announced the next-generation RX40 Series utility tractor. Building upon the RX20 line, the RX40 Series boasts significant upgrades from its predecessor and blends power, comfort, value and performance.

#### CLEGG IMPACT TESTER APP

Turf-Tec International announced that the newly released Clegg Impact Tester app for Android and iOS allows users



to wirelessly connect the FieldScout TDR350 Moisture Sensor or the Mascaro Infill Cleat Depth Tester.

### **KAWASAKI ADDS PREMIUM UTV**

Kawasaki took the wraps off its latest creation — the 2024-'25 Kawasaki Ridge UTV. The manufacturer designed this sport-utility vehicle for off-road enthusiasts who use their UTVs for work and recreation. The vehicle lineup includes models ranging from \$24,000 up to \$33,500.

### **CF MOTO UNVEILS PREMIUM WORK UTVS**

Celebrating its 35th year in business, CF Moto held its 2025 dealer meeting in Minneapolis August 26-27. With nearly 1,000 people in attendance (many dealers brought more than one person), the company unveiled an expanded lineup of UTVs, ATVs and motorcycles.

### **SUPATURF ERASABLE TURF PAINT FOR NATURAL GRASS**

Supaturf Products released new erasable turf paints, available through Turf Printing Enterprises LLC, exclusive U.S. distributor for Supaturf. Stadia ER is an erasable paint for natural grass. Paired with the Stadia ER Remover, Stadia ER is easily washed away.



### **JOHN DEERE DEBUTS NEW**

#### **PROFESSIONAL MOWING SOLUTIONS**

John Deere unveiled its latest Z900 Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) ZTrak Mowers and newly enhanced



QuikTrak stand-on mower decks for the Q865R EFI model at the 2024 Equip Expo. These new models and deck options are designed to cater to the needs of professionals, offering improved performance, efficiency and durability.

### **KONIG LAUNCHES MOWHAWK MOWER LINE**

Texas-based Konig Industries released its new Mowhawk line of zero-turn mowers. The Commander and Commander Pro models are available in 60- and 72-inch deck sizes, and they feature 7-gauge steel construction on the deck and frame. They feature powerplants from Kohler and transmission options from both Parker and Hydrogear.



### **TORO UNVEILS NEW EQUIPMENT**

Toro introduced new products across a range of markets during the Equip Expo event in October. The Dingo TX 1000 Turbo builds off the proven success and strongest-in-class performance of the original Dingo TX 1000 with a turbo charged Yanmar diesel engine. Toro also launched the Toro 60V MAX 900 CFM Brushless Leaf Blower, and showed its Haven robotic mower.

### **BOBCAT ANNOUNCES LINEUP OF NEW PRODUCTS**

Bobcat Company expanded its product portfolio with the introduction of turf renovation equipment; forklifts; industrial air compressors; and portable power products including air compressors, generators and light towers. **SFM**





# Topdressers

## EARTH & TURF 415-SP STAND-ON TOPDRESSER

Earth & Turf offers the largest stand-on topdresser for compact and open areas. With this machine, users have the option of getting close to edges, in tight areas, through 5-foot gates and more — all while covering ground at 7 mph with a 4-foot brush expeller applying even coverage of sand. This machine is designed for users who are on and off trailers or need a compact, self-contained unit for tight storage. As a stand-on machine, operators have the ability to easily dismount to open gates or move obstacles, all while maintaining excellent visibility and snappy control.



## GKB SANDSPREADER FROM STEC

The GKB Sandspreader, available from STEC, applies a vast variety of materials across your surface, which is necessary during both field construction and maintenance. With this machine, you can save time, spread more product, and solidify healthy turf. The shape and design of the hopper ensure efficient operation and a clear view along the machine. The sand is transported to a metering gate by means of a wide, large-capacity conveyor belt. A hydraulically operated metering gate is also an option. The spreading discs are adjustable on multiple points, allowing the Sandspreader to provide perfect sand distribution no matter the task at hand.



## JOHN DEERE TD100 TOPDRESSER

The TD100 topdresser is designed specifically for John Deere ProGator heavy-duty utility vehicles. With a capacity of 12 cubic feet when level-full and 19 cubic feet when heaped, the TD100 can handle up to 1,500 pounds of material. Constructed from steel to minimize corrosion, it is further reinforced with steel members

for added strength and stability. The galvanized-steel hopper's corrosion-resistant design ensures long-term durability. The machine is equipped with a fixed-speed, endless nylon/polyester cord conveyor belt that smoothly transports material under the metering gate, with a rotating brush to ensure even distribution. The full-width metering gate is adjustable from 0 to 3 inches.



## RINK DS1600 HYBRID FROM REDEXIM

The Rink DS1600 Hybrid from Redexim features an integrated conveyor belt that transports a variety of materials to the rear of the hopper, where they are dropped onto discs for even spreading across distances of up to 13.1 yards. The operator can control the machine's functions from the seat, adjusting the start and stop of the conveyor, altering the belt speed, and changing the spreading width using the electronic control unit. Four large tires distribute the machine's weight evenly. The machine's large hopper capacity provides efficient coverage.



## TURFCO TOPDRESSERS

Turfco's topdresser lineup includes models tailored to fields of all sizes. With Turfco's topdressers, you can apply materials with consistent coverage, ensuring better turf health and optimal playing conditions. Easy-to-use controls allow operators to quickly adjust application rates, saving time and ensuring targeted application. For sports fields needing higher material capacity without requiring a larger tractor, the Turfco CR-8 is an ideal choice. Its 2.0-cubic-yard self-cleaning hopper handles both wet and dry materials with ease. Featuring Turfco's patented WideSpin technology and advanced hydraulic controls, the CR-8 offers precise control and a wide range of application options. **SFM**





# JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



## ANSWER

From page 17

This circle of thatch on top of the 419 bermudagrass high school multipurpose sports field was caused by irrigation system failure. It can also be known of as the "circle of life" or the Latin term *Incorrectus irrigationous*. It is caused by extreme low pressure in the irrigation system where the head pops up, sprays out a stream of water about 15 feet in diameter and makes this circle of green. The irrigation stream also digs into the turf a bit, forcing thatch to come to the surface in this distinct circle. Irrigation systems often go unchecked when a municipality's labor is stretched too thin or if distances between schools are too great and proper labor is not hired to cover the distances. In this instance, the area experienced a couple weeks of no rainfall, and this sand-based athletic field's irrigation system went unchecked. As you can tell, the one green area is the area inside the sprinkler's reach where the irrigation was watering the turf. The remainder of the field was quite toasty with several of these green circles to show the low pressure that was affecting the system. Preventative maintenance and checking irrigation systems when rainfall in plentiful goes a long way in avoiding situations like this.



### Photo from John Mascaro's collection

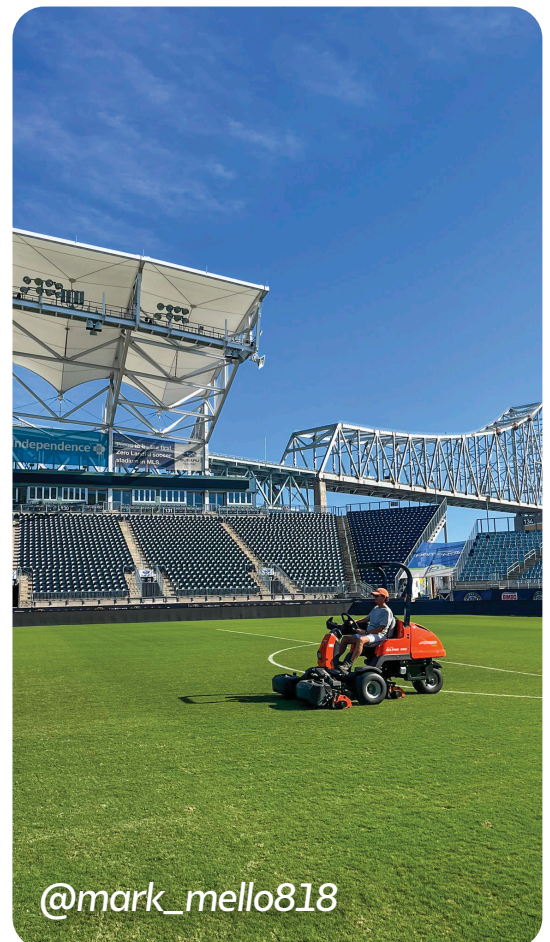
*John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International*

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz, please send a high-resolution digital photo to John Mascaro via email at [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* magazine and the Sports Field Management Association.



The following are photos and posts pulled from industry social media feeds during the past month.

Scan the QR code for links to all of our feeds and connect with us.



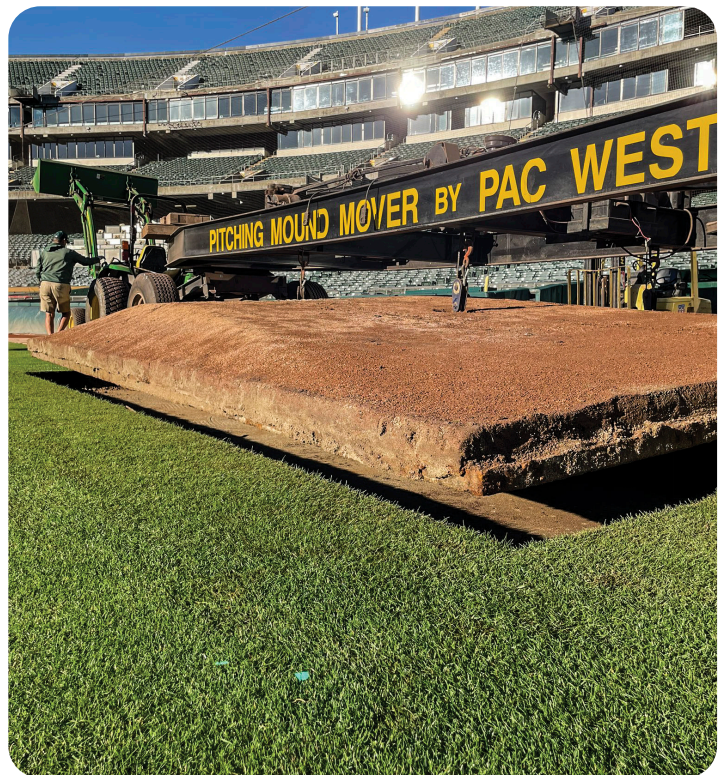


**@OSUTurfClub**

Great to have Superintendent of Springfield Country Club, Chad Dorrell, come talk to our club about some aspects that school doesn't always teach students going into the turf industry. @sccturfgrass

**@NE\_STMA****@fieldsourceohio****@oaklandturf**

One last dance with the Pitching Mound Mover @oaklandcol A lot of ups and downs with these from 1996 to 2019 between @Athletics and @Raiders a lot of time and work saved!!!! #BestGroundsCrewEver

**@SportsTurfSun**



@ScoutAllen4

Wrapping up the final game with the crew after 4 great years. It has been lots of fun on and off the field. @DavidBerger51 @AHarterTurf @ryan\_knipping @dinslage\_riley @ABarney120



@nsherry2



@ousoccerfield

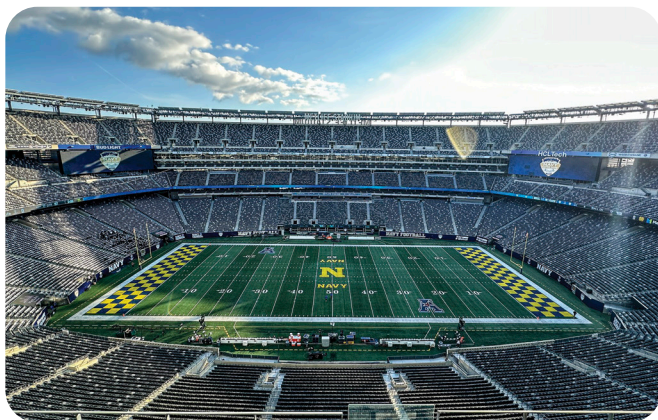
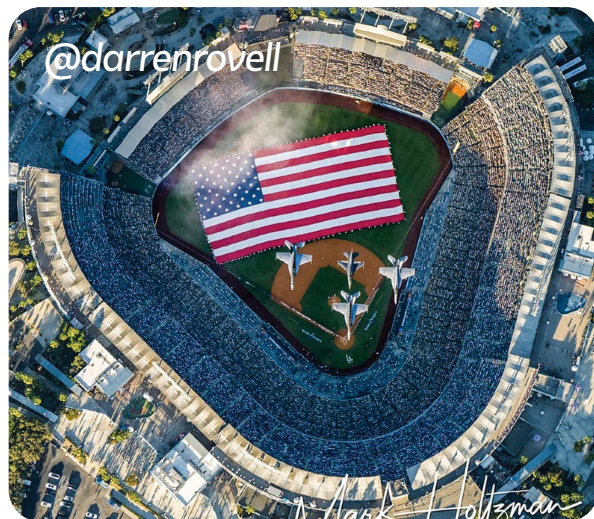
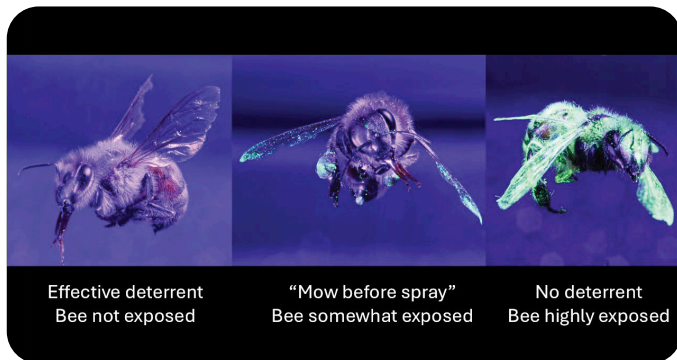


@NFedewaturf



**@VTTurfweeds**

Protecting bees from insecticide exposure! My student @godara\_nav shows that common sense measures can dramatically reduce bee visitation to weedy turf prior to insecticide treatment. UV dye as proxy for insecticide. More glow indicates more bee visitation to weedy flowers.

**@iowa\_stma**

Our board members hard at work! Great discussions going on leading up to the 2025 ITI Conference & Trade Show in February! @laturfinstitute





# Equip Expo New Product Recap

The following are some of the new product announcements from the 2024 Equip Expo in Louisville, Kentucky.

## Caterpillar

Caterpillar introduced eight new next generation Cat skid-steer loader (SSL) and compact track loader (CTL) models. Four new Cat SSLs — the Cat 250, 260, 270, and 270 XE — mark the introduction of the next generation design to the SSL line. Meanwhile, the new Cat 275, 275 XE, 285 and 285 XE mark the expansion of the next generation design for the CTL line. The largest CTLs ever produced by Caterpillar, the 285 and 285 XE compete in a new class size with greater lift height and lift and tilt breakout forces.

The next generation SSL and CTL models feature a ground-up redesign that includes upgrades in engine power and torque, lift and tilt breakout forces, stability, operator comfort and technology.

“We are excited to launch the next generation design for our skid-steer loader line and expand the performance capabilities to more compact track loader models,” said Trevor Chase, senior product consultant and new product introduction lead for Caterpillar. “Their increased power, lift height, breakout forces, rated operating capacity (ROC) and multiple high-flow auxiliary hydraulic system options give customers a flexible, high-performance machine to get the job done.”



## Exmark

### LAZER Z X-SERIES

The redesigned 2025 Lazer Z X-Series offers more power and configuration options than any other Exmark model. Choose from 52-, 60- or 72-inch UltraCut Series 6 side-discharge cutting decks, or select the 96-inch UltraCut rear-discharge flex-wing cutting deck. Side-discharge cutting decks feature Exmark's exclusive Adapt technology, which enables the operator to quickly adjust deck rake without tools, for maximum cut quality in any turf conditions.

Lazer Z X-Series models also increase productivity through increased ground speeds, with up to 12 mph



forward on models up to 72-inch, and up to 10.5 mph on the 96-inch model. Heavy-duty cast caster wheel forks deliver maximum durability and precise alignment, while the large-diameter airless caster tires provide a smooth ride and long life with zero flat tires.

The Lazer Z X-Series is designed to be quick and easy to maintain, with just four annual grease points, automatic belt tensioners, and sealed maintenance-free spindles. A redesigned seat mount improves access to the front of the engine and hydro drive components, while the rear engine guard removes with just four bolts for easier engine access. For 2025, Exmark added standard LED lighting to the front and sides of the mower, making the Lazer Z X-Series capable of extending the length of the workday when needed.

### LAZER Z S-SERIES

The Exmark Lazer Z S-Series is available with a wide range of cutting decks, including 52-, 60- or 72-inch UltraCut Series 4 side-discharge, or 60- or 72-inch UltraCut Rear-Discharge cutting decks. Choose from powerful carbureted Kawasaki or EFI Kohler V-Twin commercial engines. The on-board diagnostics give the operator clear visibility of vital functions, including an electronic fuel gauge, battery voltage warning, hour meter and OPC safety switch monitoring. A 12-gallon single fuel tank provides extended runtimes between fill-ups.

### LAZER Z E-SERIES

With an all-new design for 2025, the Lazer Z E-Series is the most affordable model in the Lazer Z family. With a choice of 48-, 52- or 60-inch UltraCut Series 4 cutting decks, and heavy-duty Kawasaki and Vanguard engine options, it's



the most powerful, productive Lazer Z E-Series yet. A new discharge chute design provides more even distribution of clippings for a cleaner finished cut.

A new suspension seat increases operator comfort, and the new unibody frame design eases maintenance access to the engine and hydro drive system. With just two annual grease points and sealed bearing spindles that never require greasing, the Lazer Z E-Series is designed to require zero in-season maintenance.

To round out the Lazer Z lineup, Exmark offers both the electric-powered Lazer Z V-Series and the diesel-powered Lazer Z models, with cutting widths ranging from 60-inches on the electric to 60-, 72-, 96 and 144-inches on the diesel.

### AUTONOMOUS TURF TRACER FOR 2026

Exmark also showed the autonomous Turf Tracer with XiQ technology, an early-release 2026 model. The manufacturer said the state-of-the-art XiQ technology integrates high-precision GNSS satellite and RTK cellular mapping technologies with radar detection to the front and sides to detect obstacles and prevent collisions. The mapping technology allows users to create and store property profiles that can be saved online.

The integrated safety system offers audible and visual alarms to aid in safe operation, as well as a remote stop, collision avoidance, PTO and ground drive monitoring. In addition to the app, a full-color 4.3-inch display delivers machine status data without the need to open the app. The new mower has a 60-inch UltraCut Series 4 cutting deck with fully welded high-strength steel construction.

## Gravely Pro-Stance Ultra

Gravely expanded its commercial stand-on portfolio with the introduction of the Gravely Pro-Stance Ultra. The new platform features 52- and 60-inch deck offerings, plus a 72-inch EFI model.

"This launch marks an exciting chapter in the Gravely story," said AriensCo Sr. Vice President of Customer Success Stephen Ariens. "Gravely is the brand for professionals who need rugged equipment with superior performance and high ergonomic standards. This product is a perfect fit to give our customers what they need to succeed and grow their businesses through efficiency."



### Pro-Stance Ultra features:

- A wide, curved operator pad extending below knee height eliminates the potential for knee impact.
- 15-inch caster wheels.
- An adjustable platform accommodates a variety of operators.
- The pitched, forward-facing controls are angled to reduce wrist strain.
- A 16-gallon fuel tank.

A trio of Gravely's new commercial spindles are cast from cold-forged aluminum, serviceable, and more resilient to moisture penetration and debris ingestion. The Pro-Stance Ultra also carries over the proprietary deck-lift assist pedal from the existing Pro-Stance platform. This feature allows the operator to float the deck over roots and ruts without the need to remove their hands from the controls and it makes changing cutting height easier. It's powered exclusively by 35- and 38.5-horsepower Kawasaki FX1000 and FX1000 EFI engines, and comes with a pair of Parker HTG integrated transaxles to move the machine to a top speed of 12.5 mph.

## Honda

### HONDA HRX, HRN AND HRC WALK-BEHIND MOWERS

The Honda HRX battery-powered walk-behind lawn mowers include two models, the HRX-BV and HRX-BE. The Honda HRX-BV offers the Honda Select Drive, a speed-adjust dial that easily adjusts the mower's speed to the operator's stride. The Select Drive offers intuitive, comfortable speed control with speed ranging from 0 mph to 4 mph. The Honda 4-in-1 Versamow System with Clip Director mulches, bags, discharges and shreds leaves with no tools or extra attachments required. The Clip Director knob also allows for simultaneous mulching and bagging; a 10-position setting directs how much grass is bagged or mulched. The model features a 21-inch NeXite deck, consisting of a highly impact-resistant material that does not dent, rust or corrode over time.

The Honda HRX-BE features the e-Select Drive (electronic) transmission, with push-button adjustable speed control from 0 to 4 mph. The electronic Blade Stop System allows the user to step away from the mower to empty the bag or move items out of the way without having to stop and restart the motor. This model also uses a 21-inch NeXite deck, and the 4-in-1 Versamow system with clip director.

The Honda HRN-BV is a new, battery-powered walk-behind model with Smart Drive self-propel, offering intuitive, variable-speed control while mowing and five adjustable positions for user comfort. The HRN-BV offers superior cut quality whether mulching or bagging, even in tough mowing conditions. The speed ranges from 0 to 3.8





The HRC-BE offers an electric cruise control transmission, incorporating a simple lever, making it easy and convenient to adjust speed from 0 to 4 mph. The mower also features the electronic Blade Stop System. The mower has a 21-inch heavy-duty steel deck. Strong, lightweight, nine-inch wheels offer increased durability and performance with better maneuverability.

#### **HONDA ZTR**

The Honda ZTR lawn mower features the MicroCut Twin Blade system, which uses stacked and offset blades, with four cutting edges that make multiple cuts on the blades of grass — and re-snips the cut blades into smaller pieces as the blades spin. Honda's design lifts the blades of grass before they are cut, offering a high level of grass shredding that does not require an extra mulching kit or leave unsightly clumps of cut grass on the turf.

Using one foot pedal, the operator can raise and lower the deck, hands-free. The driver also can use the cut height dial to choose from 15 cut height settings, ranging between 1.5 inches to five inches (plus one storage setting). Three different driving modes (Professional, Normal, and Precision) let the operator control mower speed for optimal maneuverability on a variety of turf conditions. The side discharge disperses the clippings while the variable blade speed options save battery power by allowing the driver to select the appropriate blade speed for the cutting need, allowing for longer runtime. Further, the offset position of the caster-type wheels, along with the blade motor and blade lift, ensure the mower will not leave behind flattened, uncut grass.

The Honda lawn mower is the only battery-powered ZTR in its class with full mower suspension, a mechanical suspension seat, front suspension with torsional dampening, and rear trailing arm suspension. For added convenience, Honda's Ideal Operator Position System (IOPS) allows the ZTR operator to adjust the seat position,

drive controls and handles. All of the drive controls move with the seat, adjusting easily to comfortably fit the operator, whether the driver is less than five feet tall or more than six feet tall.

## **John Deere**

### **NEW EFI Z900 ZERO-TURN MOWERS**



The lineup of new John Deere ZTrak offerings include the Z955M/R, Z965M/R, Z975M and Z985R models. This model expansion features EFI engines with horsepower options from 30.5 through 40 hp. The new Z900 ZTrak models offer smoother operation as the fuel injection system and ignition work together to maintain performance.

"Our new Z900 EFI ZTrak mowers represent a significant advancement in our lineup, providing a larger portfolio of EFI horsepower ranges for smooth performance across different conditions and grass types," said Brian Aldinger, product manager, John Deere. "With features like Oil Guard, electronic throttle control and improved machine diagnostics, we are ensuring that our customers can achieve superior productivity with more power than ever before."

Additionally, these models are equipped with a display panel that delivers the following information to the operator: vehicle hours, fuel level, engine speed and system voltage, as well as indicators for power take-off, operator presence control, low oil pressure, park brake and diagnostic codes.

### **NEW MOWER DECK ENHANCEMENTS FOR THE Q865R EFI QUIKTRAK MOWER**

The enhanced QuikTrak stand-on mower product range continues to deliver compact, maneuverable mowers



that excel in restricted or tight areas, offering excellent visibility to minimize operator damage to property and equipment. The John Deere QuikTrak mowers are designed to provide a maneuverable and efficient solution for green industry professionals, and the latest deck offerings for the Q865R EFI model are made to help maximize productivity and capability on the job.

The new 72-inch 7Iron PRO deck option includes anti-scalp wheels in six locations around the deck to minimize scalping in uneven terrain, a single-drive belt design, and spindle covers designed to ease clean out at the end of the day.

The new 60-inch FastBack PRO rear-discharge deck, also available on the Q865R EFI mower, provides a rear-discharge deck option for users mowing in challenging settings including cemeteries, roadsides/medians, and governmental properties. Mow in both directions; eliminate time-wasting deadhead passes to reposition mower to control clippings from being thrown in unwanted areas.

## Stihl

### AZA 700 SERIES MOWERS



Powered by a 24-kWh lithium-ion battery, the Stihl AZA 700 Series includes the AZA 748, AZA 752, and AZA 760 with cutting deck widths of 48, 52 and 60 inches. According to Stihl, the mowers deliver a runtime of up to 8 hours on a single charge and have the ability to reach speeds up to 14 mph. Each mower converts from standing to walk-behind mode, giving operators total control over how they work. The HMI (human machine interface) dashboard touchscreen display lets users to access real-time data, and LTE-mobile connectivity with GPS, these mowers offer remote communication and next-level tech capabilities.

### PROPOWER HUB

This device can charge up to 30 batteries overnight using a dedicated 120V/15A circuit, providing optimal power for most crews to operate for a full day. With easy installation and clear LED indicators, monitoring and managing the charging status is straightforward and hassle-free. This sequential charging solution can save professionals up to \$3,000 in electrical infrastructure costs.

### BACKPACK BLOWERS

Designed for the pro user, Stihl designed its new blowers to clear large spaces. A variable trigger, adjustable tubes, and cruise control provide a fully customizable experience. Versatile ECO and boost modes allow for more runtime and greater power. Both models weigh just 31.97 pounds when equipped with two AP batteries. Each blower features a 3-point harness for ergonomic support and is designed to maintain constant power output. Users can choose from four operational speeds — ECO mode, mid-level, full performance, and boost mode — for a tailored performance experience.

## Toro

### DINGO



The Dingo TX 1000 Turbo builds off the success and performance of the original Dingo TX 1000 with a turbo charged Yanmar diesel engine and the new patent-pending Smart Power feature to maximize engine, auxiliary, and traction torque.

The 24.7-hp. Yanmar diesel engine is engineered with a focus on performance, and delivers up to 4.1 mph ground speeds in both forward and reverse. The machine features a single diesel fuel tank (10.25 gallons) on the operator's left-hand side and the hydraulic oil reservoir on the operator's right-hand side for improved serviceability. **SFM**





In this retrospective, we take a look at historic issues of *SportsTurf* magazine, predecessor to *SportsField Management* magazine. This time around, we journey back to 1996.

1996 kicked off by recognizing Steve Wightman, head groundskeeper at Jack Murphy Stadium, as *SportsTurf* "Man of the Year." Wightman's resume at the time including having been a teacher of sports turf management at Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, California; member of SportsTurf Advisory Board; STMA board member, treasurer and two terms as president of STMA; winner of Hunter Industries' Lifetime Achievement Award for his "contributions to the sports turf management profession and his efforts to promote education and training in the industry"; and winner of the 1984 Harry C. Gill Memorial Award for his dedication to "developing and maintaining quality sports turf areas, outstanding ability and commitment to sports turf industry service."

The February cover story, titled "Evolution of Super Field," chronicled the preparation for the 1996 Super Bowl at Sun Devil Stadium in Arizona. Twelve

months prior to the game between the Steelers and Cowboys, the sod was purchased and prepared in the warm climate of Bermuda Dunes, California. In November 1995, Joe Foster, vice president of West Coast Turf, stated, "I had roots down eight-plus inches and the Tifway Bermudagrass was thriving. We overseeded

the fields with a blend of perennial ryegrass at a rate of 30 pounds per 1,000 square feet in October."

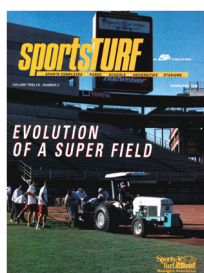
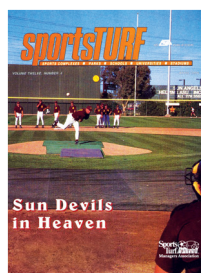
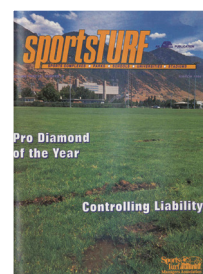
The February 1996 issue also introduced Mike Schiller as STMA president. Said Schiller, "We can only continue to grow and prosper through your active participation. Become a doer, not a sideline observer. You'll get much more out of the organization if you do."

Thurman Munson Memorial Stadium, Canton, Ohio, was highlighted in the March 1996 issue as the 1995-1996 Professional Diamond of the Year. The field thrived

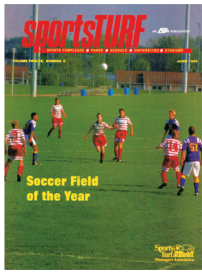
throughout the 1995 season despite searing heat and high humidity; a 70-game home Minor League schedule; 39 amateur games; and baseball camps for area youth.

*SportsTurf* magazine's April 1996 edition profiled the Mississippi State University four-year agronomy-based degree in golf and sports turf

management that required an additional 12 months of experience for graduation. MSU had traditionally offered a Turfgrass Management Program in the department of plant and soil sciences, but changed the program to Golf and Sports Turf Management, added the mandatory co-op program, adjusted the curriculum and designated electives to address the special needs of students. Dr. Mike Goatley, associate professor, worked with Dr. Jeff Krans







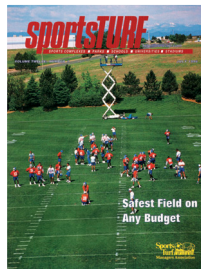
to develop the curriculum.

Digging into the archives always results in at least one time-capsule-type article that is fun to look back on. In this case, it is a couple of articles from April 1996 that outlined this thing called the Internet. Bob Boufford, assistant professor of agronomy

at Clark State Community College, wrote "The Internet and the myriad applications available on it, particularly the World Wide Web, or 'Web,' are fast becoming the new communications media and will soon become as necessary as the fax machine."

Editor Jim Williams supplemented Boufford's article with a column about trying to understand "the difference between the Web, the Internet, America OnLine, CompuServe or many of the other amazing components of the system that links computers around the world." He added that he "didn't have to do any wiring or installing, but once all the gizmos are up and running the rest is as easy as using a TV remote control."

Dr. Gil Landry outlined the planning and construction of softball fields for the 1996 Summer Olympics in the May 1996 issue of SportsTurf. One of the Olympic softball projects involved the removal of a nine-hole golf course



to develop eight Olympic-quality softball practice fields. The other entailed converting a Minor League Baseball field to the Olympic softball game site then back to a baseball field following the Olympics.

The June issue of SportsTurf delved into thatch management for warm-season turf; plant growth regulators; and SUNY Cobleskill's



Turf Equipment Program, which updated its equipment technology curriculum to offer an associate's degree with a major in Turf and Grounds Care Equipment Technology.

For anyone who has been to Louisville for what is now the Equip Expo, the July 1996 issue of SportsTurf featured an interesting article about what it takes to maintain the Kentucky Exposition Center. The development and growth of the site to that point (and since) is intriguing.

In the August issue, mowing patterns were the lead story as three "pattern masters" shared their secrets

for mowing pattern success. They were Gary Vanden Berg, director of grounds, Milwaukee Brewers; David Mellor, assistant director of grounds, Milwaukee Brewers; and Mark Razum, head groundskeeper for the Colorado Rockies.

September focused on irrigation with information regarding Brown University's sports field irrigation system. The issue also included a follow-up piece about the Olympic softball fields.

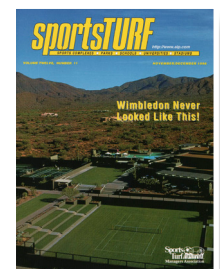
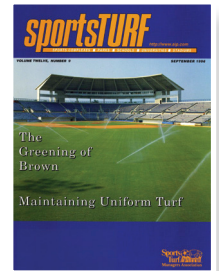
The October issue, meanwhile, delved heavily into STMA's mission statement, "To be a leader in the sports turf industry, to enhance, promote and improve professionalism through excellence in communication, training, research, education and services." The cover story shared how Gary Peterson, Iowa State University Cooperative Extension

commercial horticulture specialist, began an outreach program to focus on the STMA mission statement. The outreach program was a free service to sports field managers – especially at the high school level – to help improve field quality.

"Many of the calls for help with sports fields came from small schools, often in rural areas," said

Peterson. "Generally, the person responsible for field care also was in charge of all the grounds, and maybe the exterior and interior of the buildings as well. Many of these people tackle the whole job themselves, with limited assistance."

SportsTurf wrapped up 1996 with a look at grass tennis courts and a profile of Sonoran Clubhouse, a tennis complex whose grounds were constructed to meet USGA putting green specifications, including a herringbone-patterned drainage system 18 inches below the surface; six inches of pea gravel; 12 inches custom sand/peat moss blend; and hybrid dwarf Tifgreen bermuda, PDI02, mowed to 0.150 (thousandths) of an inch. **SFM**



*All content for this section is pulled from the SportsTurf/ SportsField Management archives, an ongoing cooperative project of EPG Media, SFMA and the Michigan State University Libraries. Public access to the archive from 1985 to the present (less two months) is available at <https://sturf.lib.msu.edu/index.html>.*



## PGMS presents the 2024 Annual Green Star Awards

The Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) recognized 23 grounds management programs for excellence in the 2024 Green Star Awards Competition. PGMS announced the awards during the Annual Awards Celebration held October 17 in conjunction with the 2024 Annual Conference “Transform” & Equip Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky.

This awards program brings national recognition to grounds maintained with a high degree of excellence. The Green Star Awards competition complements other national landscape award programs that recognize outstanding landscape design and construction. During the awards celebration, PGMS presented nine Grand Awards, its highest honor, as well as 12 Honor Awards and two Merit Awards.

■ In the Athletic Complex (High School, Collegiate, Semi-Pro) category, **South Bend School District** in South Bend, Indiana received a Grand Award.

■ **St. Louis CITY SC** in St. Louis, Missouri received the Grand Award in the Athletic Complex (Professional Fields) category.

■ In the Industrial Commercial Site or Office Park category, **Navy Federal Credit Union — Cutler Dawson Headquarters Campus** in Vienna, Virginia received an Honor Award.

■ **Denison University** in Granville, Ohio received an Honor Award in the Olmsted Property category.

■ A Grand Award in the Park, Recreation Area or Playground category was presented to **Texas A&M University — Aggie Park** in College Station, Texas; an Honor Award was presented to **Bonita Bay Community Association — Butterfly Garden** in Bonita



PGMS Green Star Award winner, St. Louis CITY SC



Springs, Florida; and a Merit Award was received by **City of Greer Urban Parks** in Greer, S.C.

■ **The University of Arizona — Central Mall** in Tucson, Arizona received a Grand Award in the Small Site Category; and the **University of North Carolina — Charlotte — Niner Waterfall** in Charlotte, N.C. received a Merit Award.

■ Three campuses were honored in the University and College Grounds — Small category. A Grand Award was presented to **Texas A&M University — San Antonio**. Honor Awards were given to **Taylor University** and **Skidmore College**.

■ **University of Rochester** and **Murray State University** received a Grand Award. **Texas Woman's University** and **The University of Alabama — Huntsville** received Honor Awards in the University and College Grounds — Mid-Size category.

■ In the University and College Grounds — Large (500+ acres) category, the Grand Award was given to **Oklahoma State University**. **North Carolina State University**, **University of Mississippi** and **University of Alabama** were presented with Honor Awards.

■ A Grand Award was given to **Villanova University** in the Urban University Grounds category. Honor Awards were presented to the **College of Charleston** and **Northeastern University — Boston Campus**.

## PGMS announces new president and board

The Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) elected and installed Michael Gildea, CGM, of the Chevy Chase Club in Chevy Chase, Maryland, as its new president. As the 103rd grounds management professional to hold the office, Gildea succeeds Roger Conner, CGM, CGT, of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, as the chief elected officer of the more than 100-year-old green industry organization.

In addition to Gildea, PGMS members elected Donald Bottger, CGM, of the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, as president-elect. Vincent Jagodzinski, CGM, of SBD Outdoor in Valley City, Ohio, as vice-president, and Phil Richey of Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, as treasurer.

The PGMS regional directors are as follows:

■ Northeast Regional Director Dallas Cott, CGM, of Slippery Rock University in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania

■ North Central Regional Director Mark Baldwin, CGM of Oakland County — Facilities Maintenance & Operations in Waterford, Michigan

■ Northwest Regional Director Christopher Hall, CGT of Richland School District in Richland, Washington

■ Southeast Regional Director Jimmy Viars, CGM of Gloucester County Public Schools in Gloucester, Virginia

■ South Central Regional Director Barbara Hatchel, CGM, CGT of Texas A&M University — SSC Services for Education in College Station, Texas

■ Southwest Regional Director Sandra Obenour-Dowd of the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona  
The directors at large include:

■ Brandon Haley, CGM of SSC Services for Education in Moody, Alabama

■ Bill Quade of The Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina

■ Bedia Collins, CGM, CGT of Fayette County Board of Education in Lexington, Kentucky

Roger Phelps of Stihl in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and Joel Spies of Rainbow Ecoscience in Minnetonka, Minnesota, will serve as supplier member representatives. Kelly Kopp of Utah State University in Logan, Utah is the educator representative.

## HNP Landscape Architecture celebrates its 45th year

As HNP Landscape Architecture celebrates its 45th year of business, the firm extended gratitude to its clients, colleagues and partners. The firm's growth over the years has been marked by an increasing variety and scale of projects.

Founded in 1979 with work in residential and corporate planning and landscape design, HNP now offers landscape architecture and planning services for universities, school systems, city parks, and a full range of athletic venues across multiple sports and competition levels.

The team collectively brings more than 180 years of experience, and holds professional registrations in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Arkansas. Active involvement with the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) ensures that the firm stays at the forefront of industry standards. Recognition from both ASBA and ASLA attests to the quality of its work. In the past two decades alone, more than 20 fields, courts, and tracks designed by HNP have been celebrated for excellence by ASBA.

HNP values diverse project experiences to balance practicality and imagination. Despite the evolving landscape of technology and processes, HNP's dedication to quality remains unwavering. The firm believes that strong client relationships is the cornerstone of continued growth and success. Looking to the future, HNP remains committed to delivering exceptional landscape architecture exceeding client expectations. **SFM**



# Invest in Your Future: Join SFMA Today



The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) is the recognized leader in championing the sports field industry and its professionals.

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

SFMA has specific membership categories for every professional in the sports field management industry.

- **Sports field manager:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining sports fields.
- **Sports field manager associate:** If you are primarily responsible for managing or maintaining a sports field(s) and your organization already has an SFMA sports field manager member employed.
- **Affiliate:** If you are indirectly or on a part-time basis involved in the maintenance/management of sports fields (coaches, athletic directors, volunteers, etc.).
- **Academic:** If you are in teaching, extension or research.
- **Student:** If you are a full-time student.
- **Commercial:** If you work for a company engaged in a commercial enterprise providing services and/or products to the sports field management profession (consultants, architects, designers, contractors, management companies, distributors and manufacturers, etc.).
- **Commercial associate:** If you are the second person (or more) from a commercial company (must first have an SFMA commercial member at their company before this lower-dues category can be selected).
- **Retired:** If you are retired and no longer seeking full-time employment within the scope of activities of any SFMA membership category, and have been a member for a minimum of five years, you may become a non-voting member of SFMA and are not eligible to hold elective office.

## THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO JOIN SFMA

1. **Job security:** SFMA's programs and services proactively enhance your value to your employer.
2. **Career success:** SFMA's education and information help prepare you to take that next step in your career.
3. **Recognition of your professionalism:** In addition to the individual recognition you receive because of your good work, SFMA's advocacy with groups such as athletic directors, parks and recreation directors, coaches and parents enhances the image of the entire profession.



## BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE AS AN SFMA MEMBER

- A network of peers who share their best practices.
- Opportunities for education.
- Quick access to information and resources.
- A monthly electronic newsletter that communicates association and industry information.
- Access to the Member's Only section of *sportsfieldmanagement.org*, which has a real-time membership directory and hundreds of technical educational resources.
- Access to Michigan State's Turfgrass Information File, a resource for up-to-date technical information.
- Ability to enter your field in the nationally recognized Field of the Year awards program.
- Opportunity to become a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) and to have your facility certified as environmentally responsible.
- Significant savings on registration to SFMA's annual and regional conferences, and discounts to other organizations' education.
- Opportunity to participate in volunteer leadership positions.
- Opportunity to join one of SFMA's affiliated chapters for a strong local network. (Each chapter sets its own local dues.)
- Purchase SFMA branded apparel.
- *SportsField Management Magazine* each month.
- The ability to apply for scholarships (students only).
- Discounted exhibitor booth at the annual conference (commercial members only).

For more information, visit <https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/why-join-stma/> **SFM**



# 2024

## **DECEMBER 2-6**

### **AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING**

Orlando

<https://sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents>

# 2025

## **JANUARY 13-16**

### **SPORTS FIELD MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

Palm Springs, California

<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/conference>

## **FEBRUARY 9-13**

### **TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY**

San Antonio

<https://turfgrasssod.org/>



## **JULY 1-3**

### **NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

San Antonio

<https://ncs4.usm.edu/events/annual-conference/>

## **OCTOBER 13-15**

### **SYNTHETIC TURF COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

<https://www.syntheticturfCouncil.org/>

## **OCTOBER 22-24**

### **EQUIP EXPO**

Louisville, Kentucky

<https://www.equipexposition.com/>

## **OCTOBER 22-24**

### **PGMS SCHOOL OF GROUNDS MANAGEMENT**

Louisville, Kentucky

<https://pgms.org/page/AnnualConference>

## **NOVEMBER 2-5**

### **ELEVATE (NALP)**

Phoenix

<https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/ELEVATE>

## **DECEMBER 1-5**

### **AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING**

San Antonio

<https://sportsbuilders.org/page/UpcomingEvents>

## **DECEMBER 8-11**

### **IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK**

New Orleans

<https://irrigation.org/IA> **SFM**



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<b>Colorado SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.csfma.org">www.csfma.org</a>	<b>Nebraska SFMA</b> <a href="http://www.nebraskaturfgrass.com/nestma">www.nebraskaturfgrass.com/nestma</a>
<b>Florida #1 (South Florida STMA):</b> <a href="http://www.sfstma.com">www.sfstma.com</a> or Phil Busey ( <a href="mailto:phil@philbusey.com">phil@philbusey.com</a> )	<b>New England STMA:</b> <a href="http://www.nestma.org">www.nestma.org</a>
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<b>Florida #3 (Central Florida STMA):</b> <a href="http://www.CFSFMA.org">www.CFSFMA.org</a> or <a href="mailto:CentralFloridaSFMA@gmail.com">CentralFloridaSFMA@gmail.com</a>	<b>Northern California SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.norcalstma.org">www.norcalstma.org</a>
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<b>Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org. (KAFMO):</b> <a href="http://www.kafmo.org">www.kafmo.org</a>	<b>South Carolina SFMA:</b> <a href="https://scsfma.org/">https://scsfma.org/</a>
<b>Mid-Atlantic SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.masfma.org">www.masfma.org</a>	<b>Tennessee Valley SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.tvstma.org">www.tvstma.org</a>
<b>Michigan SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.misfma.org">www.misfma.org</a>	<b>Texas SFMA:</b> <a href="http://www.txstma.org">www.txstma.org</a>
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# Preparing Sports Fields for Improved Irrigation Absorption Next Season

**Q:** If a school has an irrigation system, what would you recommend they set it to run for next summer? Their soil is clay.

**A:** Cool-season grasses generally need about one inch of water per week to replace what is lost through evapotranspiration (ET) during the growing season. While this is a general guideline, not all grasses require exactly this amount — as specific water needs vary depending on grass type and soil conditions. For sports fields, the soil type significantly affects water requirements. Clay soils retain moisture longer than sandy soils, but when dry can lead to runoff issues. Sandy soils, on the other hand, drain quickly and need more frequent watering.

Applying one inch of water all at once to a field is usually ineffective, as most of it will likely run off, particularly on slopes or compacted soil. To enhance absorption, water is typically applied in smaller increments to allow it to penetrate the soil. It is best applied very early in the morning to avoid those times of day that are hot and windy. Ground cover also affects water retention; bare soil dries out faster than areas with a full, healthy stand of grass. Additionally, weather conditions can influence water loss, with fields drying out more quickly during hot, windy or sunny periods than in milder, cloudy weather. For that reason, adjusting watering schedules based on real-time ET data or soil moisture sensors can lead to more efficient water use.

The summer and fall of 2024 brought prolonged heat and drought to many areas, leading to substantial soil water loss. Even decent rainfalls of 0.25-0.5 inches were not enough to replenish the soil water deficit, and compacted fields repelled the water, causing it to run off. Looking ahead to 2025, sports fields should be prepared so they are ready to retain moisture more effectively, whether through rainfall or irrigation.

One of the best strategies for moisture retention is maintaining full turfgrass cover. With 100% ground cover, soils can better retain moisture, which supports healthier rootzones and reduces surface runoff. Improving soil structure is also essential; fields with reduced compaction are less likely to experience water runoff and can absorb water more effectively.

For fields without in-ground irrigation systems, now is an ideal time to consider portable options, such as rain trains, water cannons or large sprinklers. Portable equipment may not provide uniform coverage on large fields, but could be helpful for smaller areas. Assessing equipment costs, labor requirements and watering schedules will help meet field needs.

Rather than watering the entire field, concentrate on high-traffic areas where soil compaction and wear are most prevalent. To improve water retention in compacted soils, incorporate organic matter through aeration and topdressing. Adding quality organic material, such as screened compost or a soil:compost mix, can help build soil structure and improve water retention. If using sand or soil as topdressing, ensure it matches the field's existing soil composition to avoid layering issues that can interfere with water movement. Consult your compost supplier for specific material characteristics — such as organic matter content, particle size, carbon-to-nitrogen ratio and pH — to ensure you're adding quality material free from contaminants. Avoid using peat moss as a topdressing, as it lacks the bulk needed for soil structure; instead, opt for a bulking agent such as wood chips.

Applying compost during aeration or as a ¼-inch topdressing layer across the field can also reduce fertilizer costs, as compost typically contains nitrogen and other nutrients beneficial to turfgrass. Be prepared for a growth surge in spring if compost with moderate nitrogen is used, as this may increase mowing frequency. **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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