

SportsField

MANAGEMENT

June 2026

Vol. 42 No. 6

The Official Publication of the Sports Field Management Association

Safety and Security **18** | The Life of a Sports Field Manager **22**

Landscape Plants **24** | World Cup Q&A **32**



A person wearing a dark jacket and a yellow safety vest is operating a maintenance vehicle, possibly a roller or a similar piece of equipment, on the infield dirt of a baseball field. The field is green with a brown dirt infield. In the background, there are trees and a scoreboard.

MUZZY FIELD				
TEAM	BALL	STRIKE	OUT	E
AWAY	1	1	0	0
HOME	1	1	0	0

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Editor's Note



John Kmitta

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The Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) held an in-person board meeting and strategic planning workshop in the Chicago area in May. The meeting focused on the future direction of the association and profession.

Discussions centered on the development of SFMA's strategic plan, organizational priorities, member value, and long-term sustainability. SFMA Past-President (1994-95) Greg Petry served as facilitator for the strategic planning workshop, which was built upon insights gathered during the recent SFMA Listening Tour and member survey findings.

In addition to the strategic plan workshop, the board addressed association initiatives focused on future conference planning, expanded educational offerings, member engagement, industry partnerships, leadership development, and the long-term financial sustainability of SFMA.

The board also received updates from SFMA committees, special task forces and special interest groups — all of which continue to play an important role in advancing the mission and work of the association.

"In-person meetings continue to provide tremendous value for our board as we work through complex topics and strategic decisions together," said Paula Sliefert, CEO of SFMA. "The collaborative discussions, re-



lationship building, and focused planning time allowed us to make meaningful progress on the future direction of the organization and the services we provide to our members."

The board of directors was also joined by special guest and local legend Ken Mrock, head groundskeeper of the Chicago Bears, a position he has held since 1987.

As a Chicago-area native myself, I too had the pleasure of joining the board of directors and its guests while they were in town. Having grown up as a Chicago Bears fan, it was hard not to geek out and ramble on to Ken about my local ties and my love for the Bears.

From games with my family and friends at Soldier Field to early summer mornings spent at Bears training camp (first with my father and now with my son), Ken and his crews created the canvas upon which my favorite team has played and my lifelong Bears memories were built. So, for his decades of hard work, I just want to say a belated "thanks!" **SFM**

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President's Message



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SFMA President

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Before the first whistle blows, before athletes take the field, and before fans fill the stands, someone has already been at work thinking about safety. Long before game time arrives, fields are prepared, inspected, repaired, lined, watered and managed with one goal in mind: creating an environment where athletes and communities can compete with confidence.

Every great sports experience is built on trust in the people who prepare and protect the places where the game begins. Whether it is the parent volunteer dragging and lining a field before a local coach-pitch game or the director of field operations preparing a professional stadium, the responsibility remains the same. The work may look different from one facility to another, but the purpose is shared — protecting athletes, coaches, officials and communities through preparation, awareness and care.

For many in this profession, preparation is an act of pride long before it is ever seen as a task.

That responsibility is especially highlighted this time of year. Summer schedules bring increased field traffic, rising temperatures, unpredictable weather and quick turnarounds between events — all while many professionals are already preparing for the demands of fall and

winter sports seasons. Recovery plans, field transitions, scheduling decisions, and daily evaluations are all happening simultaneously during one of the busiest stretches of the year.

The safest playing surfaces are rarely the result of game-day decisions alone. They are built through consistent preparation long before the first pitch, kickoff or whistle.

The SFMA slogan, “Where the Game Begins,” serves as a reminder that the game itself starts long before athletes ever step onto the surface. It begins with the people dedicated to preparing, managing and protecting the fields and facilities entrusted to their care. Across every level of sports, that responsibility reflects the professionalism, pride and commitment that continue to define this profession and the people within it.

I want to applaud and say thank you to everyone who contributes to that effort. From volunteers and parks crews to school districts, municipalities, colleges and professional organizations, your work often happens behind the scenes; but its impact is felt in every safe practice, every completed game, and every opportunity for athletes to compete with confidence.

Every great sports experience begins with trust in the people who prepare and protect the places where the game begins. **SFM**

— Alpha Jones, CSFM

Chapter Field Days + Summer Learning

Throughout the country, SFMA chapters are making the most of the spring and summer season by bringing members together for field days, facility tours, equipment demonstrations, golf outings and hands-on education. These events give sports field managers the opportunity to step away from their own facilities, see new practices in action, connect with peers and return home with practical ideas they can apply immediately.

This season's chapter activity reflects the strength of SFMA's local network. From synthetic turf maintenance and robotic mowing demonstrations to sprayer calibration, facility tours and peer-to-peer problem solving, chapters are creating valuable learning opportunities that support safer, more playable and better maintained sports fields.

MID-ATLANTIC SFMA: SPRING SUCCESS AND A SUMMER FIELD DAY PREVIEW

The Mid-Atlantic Sports Field Management Association (MASFMA) kicked off the season with a successful spring event at Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area on March 5. MASFMA thanked members, sponsors, speakers and guests for helping create a high-energy day of connection and learning. The chapter also recognized John McDonogh School Stadium as the 2026 DMV MVP Sports Field of the Year and celebrated its 2026 Turfgrass Scholarship Award winner, Mason Tredinnick.

MASFMA will continue the momentum with its Summer Field Day on June 10 at the Maryland SoccerPlex in Boyds, Maryland. The agenda includes field demonstrations on robotic mowers, GPS-guided line painting, sprayer equipment, turfgrass playability and safety evaluation, and natural and synthetic surface maintenance. The event will also feature a welcome from SFMA CEO Paula Sliefert and SFMA Manager of Member Programs Leah Craig, giving attendees a national perspective on SFMA's goals and chapter support.

The hands-on sessions are designed to help attendees evaluate how new technologies and field assessment tools can fit into daily operations. Topics include robotic mowers and sprayers, sports turf quality and safety testing, line painting practices at a high-use soccer facility, and synthetic turf evaluation and maintenance. Sponsor booths and demonstrations, followed by lunch and networking, round out the day.



VIRGINIA SFMA: BEHIND THE SCENES AT CARMAX PARK

The Virginia Sports Field Management Association hosted its Field & Demo Day on May 14 at CarMax Park in Richmond. The event provided members with a behind-the-scenes look at the new facility and a practical agenda focused on field preparation, calibration and weed management.

Sessions included "From the Ground Up: Behind the Scenes of CarMax Park" with James Petrella and team, building and stencil application with the Thomas Dale High School Student Turfgrass Team, sprayer and spreader calibration with Adam Nichols of Virginia Tech HR AREC, and an herbicide and weed of interest presentation. The event also offered approved VDACS recertification credit.

The program highlighted the value of learning directly on the field. Attendees had the opportunity to see how a professional facility prepares for use, how students are being introduced to sports field management skills, and how calibration and weed management practices support field safety and consistency.

NEW JERSEY SFMA: SPRING FIELD DAY AND TURFGRASS RESEARCH

The Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) held its Spring Field Day on April 15 at Ginty Park in Morris Township, New Jersey. The event was hosted by Tim Hamfeldt of Morris Township and included continuing education credits in several categories, including 3A, 8C, PP2, 10 and fertilizer.

SFMANJ also promoted the Rutgers Turfgrass Research Golf Classic on May 4 at Fiddler's Elbow Country

Club, along with upcoming Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Days in July. The chapter's calendar reflects a strong connection between local chapter engagement, university research and ongoing professional development.

KENTUCKY SFMA AND TVSFMA: REGIONAL LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY OF THE CUMBERLANDS

In April, KYSFMA organized a New Haven Community Field Clean Up Day at New Haven Community Park. The project focused on practical improvements that directly affect field safety, playability and appearance. Work included Safecoat installation, infield grading, installation of new base anchors, a new pitching rubber and a new home plate, painting foul lines and foul poles, stringing off the field, seeding and fertilizing the outfield, edging the field and helping set up the field's maintenance game plan for the year. KYSFMA organized volunteers to give back to the community and network with turf managers from across the state.

The chapter also hosted a Florence Yalls Baseball Game Social Event on May 14 in Florence, Kentucky. The event was promoted as a networking night at the ballpark, giving members a more informal way to connect outside of a traditional education setting.

Kentucky SFMA and Tennessee Valley SFMA are partnering for a June 24 Field Day at the University of the Cumberlands. The event will focus on natural turf and synthetic turf education, CEUs and networking with turf professionals.

The event will feature a full day of education, networking and tours where attendees can meet members from across the region, share stories and grow their professional network.

ADDITIONAL SUMMER CHAPTER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Several additional chapters have summer learning opportunities on the calendar:

KAFMO will host a Western PA Field Day on June 16 in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania. The chapter's mission emphasizes improving the safety, playability and appearance of athletic fields through seminars, field days, publications and networking.

Ohio SFMA will host an On-Site event on June 23 at the Ohio Premier Soccer Club Training Facility in Plain City. The event is focused on technical facility tours, operational excellence and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

MPSFMA will partner with University of Minnesota Turfgrass Extension for a July 1 Field Day at the TROE

Center on the University of Minnesota Saint Paul Campus. MPSFMA's mission focuses on sharing scientific, educational and applied knowledge for high-quality and safe playing conditions.

WHY CHAPTER FIELD DAYS MATTER

Chapter field days are one of the most effective ways SFMA members learn from one another. They combine education, demonstration and relationship-building in a format that reflects the realities of the profession. Attendees can ask questions in real time, compare strategies, see equipment in action and learn how other crews solve common challenges.

This season's events show how chapters continue to strengthen the SFMA community by creating accessible opportunities for professional growth close to home.

As summer begins, SFMA chapters are once again proving that some of the best learning happens in the field. **SFM**

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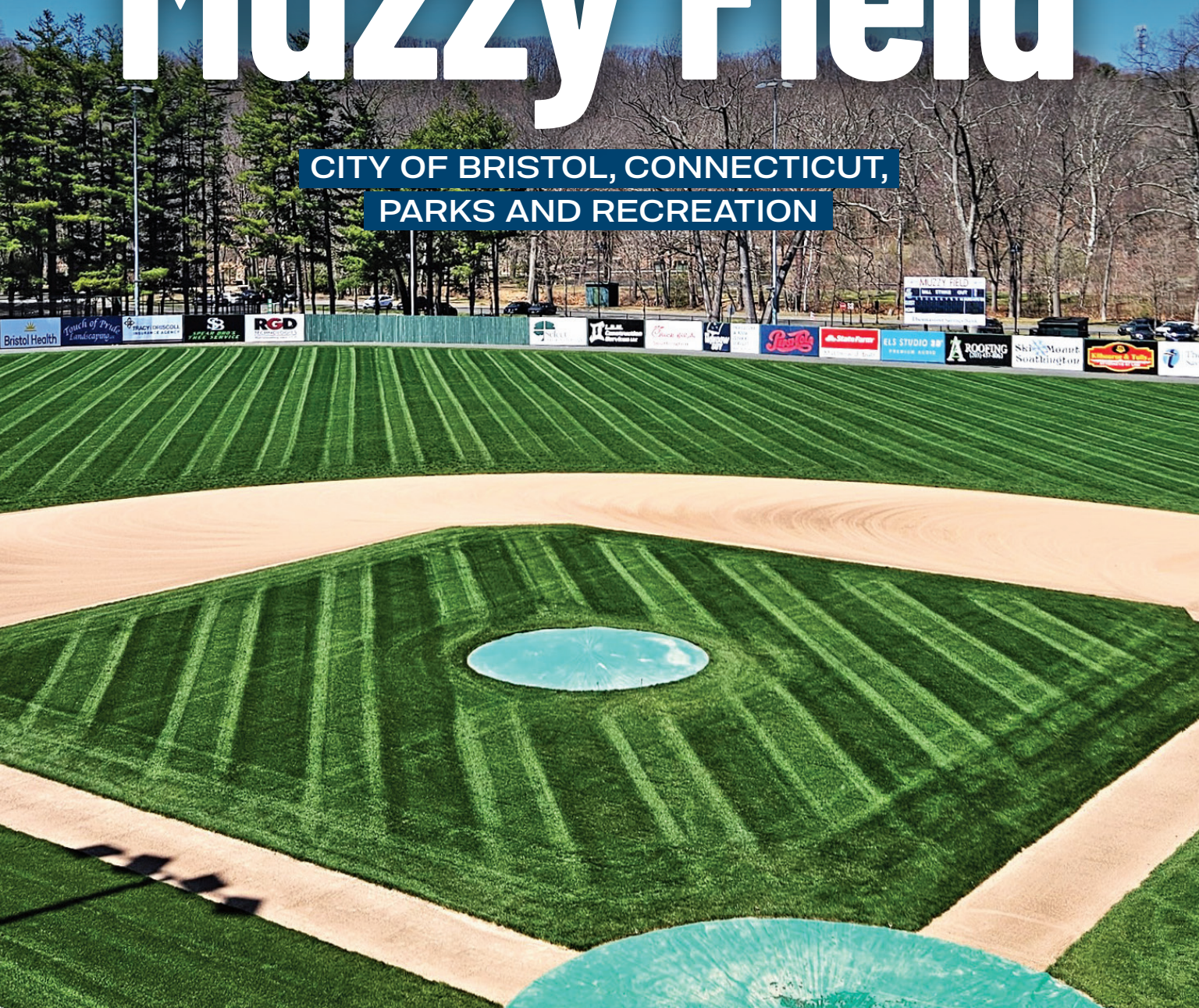
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MUZZY FIELD IS A HIGHLY maintained field because of the ballfield crew, and I am very lucky to have these people work for me. The number-one thing that you can't teach is taking pride in your work. Every crew member wants this field to be perfect, and they go above and behind to do that. This award is a huge honor for the dedication to the field that they put in. I constantly tell them what a great job they do, and I'm highly appreciative of them. Everyone that steps onto this field has a compliment to share about the field and how it is maintained. The field was awarded best playing surface for the last two years in a row by the New England Collegiate Baseball League. We have collegiate players from top universities around the nation who compliment us on the quality of the mound and playability of the field. The field gets booked from March to September, and there are only a few days in the season that are left open for rain dates. Because of all the play, it is a ton of work for one to two crew members to maintain.

One crew member flips the field for each game, and an extra crew member mows. We do our best to make it the highest level field that we can provide within our budget. Daily field prep consists of fixing and packing clay to mound and plate, raking baselines and all edges, blowing all edges, infield tining, dragging, rolling, brushing, marking lines, and painting outfield line twice per week. Additional duties include packing and fixing the bullpens, maintaining the stone dust track, and maintaining the batting cages. Spring prep includes laser grading, edging and more. During the season, edges get hose washed to keep an even transition from turf to skin. Because of the level to which the field is maintained, we rarely have a rain out. We also do all of the chemical applications on the turf; but, because of the health of the turf, we use only small amounts of pesticides. I identify and implement cultural techniques to manage pest problems, identify the source of any problem, take soil samples three times per year, determine other means available than pesticides, evaluate the control measures used, control amount of water put on the field, and maintain site records.

– Doug Trillo, CSFM, CPSI, CTTW, athletics and ballfield supervisor



Level and category of submission:
Schools and Parks Baseball

Field manager:
Doug Trillo, CSFM, CPSI, CTTW

Title:
Athletics and ballfield supervisor

Education:
High school/some college

Original facility construction:
1912-1914

Turfgrass:
Kentucky bluegrass

Overseed:
Wear areas overseeded with
Barenbrug HGT bluegrass

Rootzone:
Sandy loam

Drainage system:
Sand channel drains in the outfield

SportsField Management (SFM): Congratulations on the Field of the Year win. What are you most proud of with this win?

Doug Trillo, CSFM, CPSI, CTTW: We are honored to be selected as the winners of the SFMA 2025 FOY for Schools and Parks Baseball. Knowing that there are so many field managers and their crews that maintain their fields with hard work and pride, we are truly grateful for this award and cannot thank SFMA enough for the opportunity to showcase our field and recognize the work of the people behind the scenes.

SFM: What were the biggest challenges you have faced with the winning field, and how have you approached those challenges?

Trillo: I have a lot of the same challenges as other sports field managers and their crews: extreme weather changes, fields heavily booked with games and events, and limited crew size.

Muzzy Field was built in 1914, and the field is 100% Kentucky bluegrass with native soil (sandy loam), which has some different challenges from some other fields. Luckily, advancements in the turfgrass industry have been a tremendous help to combat these problems.

One of our biggest challenges is our crew size. We have 16 baseball and softball fields to maintain with a 7-person crew. With the number of fields we have to maintain, I am only able to send one crew member in for game prep. This is why I commend my crew. For one crew member to turn over the field at a consistently high level is a great accomplishment by each of them.

I believe one of the best approaches is planning. As sports field managers, we know we have limited time and short windows (seeding) to keep up on the field health and performance. Because we deal with many things that we cannot control, we have to plan ahead with a plan A, B and possibly C. I have a plan for every aspect of what we do to the field ahead of time with a backup plan.

SFM: Can you share a little about your overall management approach to the winning field and what you feel have been the most important aspects to getting this field to an award-winning level?

Trillo: I believe one of the most important attributes to a FOY is the continued maintenance of the field. Training your crew and communicating with crew members to ensure the proper way of maintaining the field is crucial. If someone is not properly trained, they could cause more unneces-

sary issues to the performance of the field. Communication is crucial to making sure the crew understands what has to be done. Being a municipality, I work with a smaller budget than other organizations. I try keep majority of the work in house for cost savings and experience, giving crew members different experiences.

New crew members are trained in proper field maintenance and given a checklist of duties to be completed for game prep so there is no confusion. For a high-level field, I believe attention to detail is very important for aesthetics, playability and performance.

Because of time restraints during the season, I try to limit it to just prepping the field for games. That is why the level of proper maintenance is so important.

As soon as the weather breaks and ground thaws in the spring, two crew members are sent to the field to start the spring prep, which includes edging all edges and making sure there is a smooth level transition from turf to skin. We



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Behind the Scenes at Mexico's Stadium Monterrey

Ahead of the 2026 World Cup this summer, Manager of Pitch and Natural Areas Carlos Castillo explains why he chose Tahoma 31 Bermudagrass as the surface for his new pitch. "It's the best," he says.

FOLLOW HIS JOURNEY

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FIELD OF THE YEAR SCHOOLS AND PARKS BASEBALL



also laser level the infield skin. The mound and plate are clayed, lasered for correct height, and gauged for correct specs. If time and weather allow, we repeat these duties again mid-season.

For turf maintenance I run an IPM program with annual soil tests to determine what the turf and soil need without putting down added chemicals that are not needed and reducing the use of pesticides. We also preform many other cultural practices to open up the turf profile to get water and oxygen down into the root system in conjunction with wetting agents. Incorporating these practices has helped cut costs and the amount of chemicals that are being put in the ground.

SFM: Please tell us about your crew, and anything else you would like us to know about your organization and the fields/facilities that you manage?

Trillo: I am most proud of my highly skilled crew; they are true professionals that don't cut corners. The effort they put into the job at a high level is the reason Muzzy Field preforms and looks the way that it does. Whether it is applications to the turf, building mounds, laser leveling the infield, or edging the field, they do it with a lot of pride and dedication. The majority of the work is kept in-house to provide new experiences and save money. They have done a phenomenal job on every extra project. I truly appreciate the consistent work performance they achieve every day.

SFM: Can you share a bit of insight into what the Field of the Year application process was like for you, as well as any tips you might have for other sports field managers?

Trillo: I feel SFMA's PCI sheets are a great tool — in conjunction with detailed records of what is done and applied to the field. I particularly like the field diagram and recording area of the soil moisture levels. Having this information for the FOY application made it so much more convenient. I have also used this information to document our hot spot

areas that have arisen in the past. It is my go-to for field information.

Be very precise about your dates, cost, and chemical amounts for all applications. Record all of your cultural practice or other practices you perform on your field, and be specific. For example, if you aerate, include how many directions you go, whether it is solid or hollow tine, and a small note of the reasoning behind how it is beneficial to the field.

Before and after photos show the quality of work that you or your crew put into maintaining the field. I also can't stress enough the importance of your crew members and their ability to constantly perform proper maintenance procedures. Good luck! **SFM**



Sportsfield Podcast

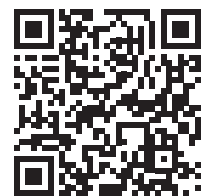
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SPORTS FIELD
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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). **SFM**

For more information, visit:

<https://www.sportsfieldmanagement.org/why-join-stma/>



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TURFGRASS PROBLEM?

PROBLEM:

Worn area at 50-yard sideline with green center

TURFGRASS AREA:

Youth and high school stadium field

LOCATION:

Brewer, Maine

TURFGRASS VARIETY:

Kentucky bluegrass and perennial rye

Answer on page 31

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International



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Safety *first*

By **Mary Helen Sprecher**

From AEDs to concussion awareness to heat protocols, safety measures always seem to be headline news, particularly for those in the sports industry.

But how about those in the sports field management industry? While first aid and health measures are essential (and should be at the forefront of any plan), it's time to look at the steps that can be taken to safeguard fields and facilities themselves — and by extension, the athletes who use them.

AFTER HOURS

The job of keeping the field safe doesn't stop when the players go home. In fact, it is essential to think about what goes on when personnel are not onsite — after all, there are plenty of concerns about break-ins, vandalism and other problems.

However, it's not always a question of locking gates or setting alarms. Because fields fall into so many different categories (public facilities in parks; school fields at the elementary, high school and college levels;

sports parks for tournaments; and even facilities for professional teams), there is no one solution that will work for everyone.

Deciding on an effective safety and security plan, therefore, takes into consideration the facility, the setting, the budget, and any risks that can be identified. In all cases, a multilayered approach is best

FENCING

Keeping fields safe starts at the perimeter. Fencing around ballparks prevents unwanted foot traffic on the field and defines the boundaries to players. According to the Major League Baseball (MLB) website, the average height of outfield fencing is 8 feet; however, lower heights are often found at amateur and recreational level fields.

To keep athletes and officials as safe as possible when on the field, metal chain-link fence material should be on the inside of the fence, with the rails to the outside, so as to avoid injury should an individual collide with the fence in the heat of the game.

Fences surrounding facilities should be checked regularly for areas of weakness; these might include loose or falling rails, bulging mesh fabric, posts that lean or gates that do not close correctly. While many repairs on fences can be performed in-house, a fencing contractor should inspect the fence on a regular basis and address any areas of concern.

LIGHTING

One of the greatest advancements in sport facilities had been the advent of LED lighting. In addition to providing better color rendition and eliminating glare, LED lights are more easily aimable, helping to eliminate light trespass.

Even better, LEDs can help win the security game. LED lighting systems (which also can be operated via a mobile app) can be dimmed when not in use but can be set to come on at full power when motion is detected. This can illuminate the whole field instantly, as well as other areas like walkways, parking lots and adjacent structures. In general, the brighter the light, the less likely it is that an intruder will want to stay onsite.

SECURITY CAMERAS

Outdoor security cameras — set wherever they may be needed but where they are unlikely to be tampered with — can be motion-activated or can be set to record on a continuing basis, depending upon the system. Signage around the facility, announcing that security cameras are present, can prove a deterrent as well.

The fact that many security systems can also be controlled by mobile apps has allowed field managers to receive an alert as soon as motion is detected in the area, to be able to see what is going on in real time and to notify authorities if needed.

CREATING AWARENESS

The more people know about the security measures being taken, the less likely you are to have problems. Create a culture of awareness and encourage facility users, particularly those at the youth level, to communicate with adults on staff if they hear about problems in the making.



Photo courtesy of
Henry Dixon | Pexels.com



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Photo courtesy of Nur Andi
Ravsanjani Gusma | Pexels.com



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Mathias Reding | Pexels.com

IN-GAME SAFETY

The preceding tips help to ensure your facility remains safe at night or when nothing is scheduled; but what are some of the steps that can be taken to ensure safety during games?

Again, it goes back to awareness. Nobody expects an emergency, but you and your staff can prepare for and respond to such events by making sure your facility is properly appointed.

FIELD AMENITIES

Regularly inspect all parts of the field, and look for problems that could result in injuries. These include problems with the field itself, any equipment players use, and even seating areas for spectators and players. Remembering that a repair now could prevent an injury (and a lot of headaches) later.

EMERGENCY EXITS

Every field should have emergency exits — and the game-time staff should memorize their locations and be ready to open them. Hold practice drills periodically to ascertain that everyone on staff remains aware. Should the area need to be evacuated for any reason, there will be no time to scramble for information. (Note: If there are no emergency exits, a fence contractor can add them.)

AMBULANCE ACCESS

Every field with perimeter fencing should have at least one gate wide enough to admit an ambulance in the event of an emergency. And although that gate should remain locked when there is no one present at the facility, it must be left unlocked during games (and practices as well). If an emergency should arise, there will be no time to hunt for the key.

WARNING SYSTEMS

Lightning detection and storm warning equipment can play an invaluable role in keeping athletes, staff and spectators aware of sudden changes in weather conditions — particularly when a warning must be sounded across multiple fields (such as at a youth sports complex where a large tournament is taking place). As with other scenarios, staff should be aware of how to safely evacuate occupants from the area. **SFM**

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA). For more information, see ASBA's Sports Fields: Construction and Maintenance Manual, available in both PDF and hard copy at www.sportsbuilders.org.

BETTER INFIELDS MEAN BETTER PERFORMANCE.



Benefits of In-Flow's InField Skin Maintenance:

Infiltration surfactant that reduces surface tension for faster and more uniform penetration

- Use less water to get optimal playing conditions
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- Maintains moisture level for longer
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Multi-functional carrier is readily biodegradable and improves profile structure

- Beneficial for all surfaces, both turf and infield
- Environmentally safe, economical, and easy to use



The Life of a Sports Field Manager

The life viewed through the eyes of a sports field manager is not found in abstraction or spectacle, but in stewardship — quiet, disciplined, and profoundly human.

By Miguel
De Jesus

It begins before the crowd arrives and long after it leaves. Life in this role reveals itself at dawn, when the dew still clings to the turf like a benediction, and the field lies unmarked by ambition or applause. We stand not as owners, but as guardians of grounds that will soon carry the weight of dreams, disappointments, triumphs and fractures. The field is a living text, and our life's work is to read it fluently, respond to it faithfully, and prepare it to receive others.

To oversee a crew of full-time employees and seasonal hands is to stand at the intersection of labor and legacy. Life's meaning here is not dominance, but direction. We do not simply assign tasks; we translate purpose. We teach that straight lines matter because fairness matters. We insist on consistency because reliability is the soil in which trust grows. We correct not to diminish, but to refine. In doing so, we shape not only surfaces, but people — crafting

professionals who learn that excellence is forged in repetition, patience and accountability when no one is watching.

Life as a sports field manager is the daily reconciliation of the uncontrollable with the disciplined. Weather mocks our schedules. Biology resists our timelines. Equipment fails. Budgets tighten. And yet meaning is born precisely in this tension — where human intention meets natural unpredictability. We learn humility from rain; wisdom from grass that refuses to grow on command; and resilience from fields that recover because someone cared enough to aerate, seed, water and wait.

There is meaning in being unseen. The scoreboard does not bear our name, yet every outcome depends upon our foresight. The athlete's performance is only possible because we made the surface honest — true footing, predictable bounce, safe play. Life teaches us here that significance is not measured by visibility, but by dependence. When everything works, no one notices us. When something fails, everyone does. This, paradoxically, is where purpose sharpens.



Managing a mixed crew — full-time and seasonal — is a lesson in time itself. Some walk with us year-round, sharing institutional memory and long-term vision. Others pass through briefly, borrowing structure, discipline and standards that may shape how they work long after they leave. Life's meaning emerges in this exchange: we give consistency to those who stay and foundation to those who go. Both matter. Neither is wasted.

Ultimately, the life of this role is custodial excellence. We prepare a stage we will never stand on. We labor for moments we will never experience from the spotlight. We ensure safety, beauty and fairness for games that are not ours to play. And in doing so we discover a quiet truth: life is not about being celebrated — it is about being necessary, faithful and excellent in the care of what has been entrusted to us.

We do not just manage fields. We cultivate integrity underfoot. We teach people how to work with purpose. We leave the ground better than we found it. And that — whether written in grass or lived in flesh — is a life well understood. **SFM**

Miguel DeJesus is supervising greenskeeper, County of Passaic (New Jersey) – Department of Parks and Recreation; and a member of Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ).

This article first appeared in the Spring 2026 issue of SFMANJ Update newsletter (Vol 26, No. 1); the author would like the readership to know that his active participation with SFMANJ and connection with members inspired him, in part, to pen this article.

NEW PLANTS

For insight into landscape trends for 2026, we are exploring plants that merit consideration for in your landscapes this year.

MONROVIA: WILD MEETS REFINED

Monrovia Nursery showcased “wild meets refined” as one of the top design trends to watch in 2026. This trend combines native plants with cultivars, ensuring a natural beauty with blooms you can count on. The design also creates a freeform look with less maintenance. Plant choices in both categories bring in pollinators and offer a flowing, relaxed look that includes grasses and perennials with rocks and nature-inspired pathways. Here’s a look at the top plants for the 2026 wild meets refined trend:



Photo by
Doreen Wynja

Sole Giatto Oxeye Sunflower

Heliopsis 'Sole Giatto'

LIGHT: Full sun

WATER: Water when top 2 inches of soil is dry.

SIZE: Reaches 12 to 18 in. tall, 16 to 20 in. wide.

DESCRIPTION: A compact variety with abundant blooms, this extra-hardy perennial provides prolific late-season, canary-yellow flowers,

with double the petals. The long-lasting blooms stand on sturdy stems. Excellent performance in the landscape and containers. Perennial.

BLOOM TIME: Summer through fall

SPECIAL FEATURES: Attracts pollinators; compact form

GROWTH RATE: Moderate

LANDSCAPE USE: Border; container

FLOWER COLOR: Yellow

HISTORY: A 2025 All-American Selections award winner.



Photo by
Doreen Wynja

Pink Pearl Agastache

Agastache 'Pink Pearl' PPAF

PRONUNCIATION: ah-gas-TAH-kee

LIGHT: Full sun

WATER: Allow soil to dry slightly before watering.

SIZE: Quickly reaches 16 in. tall and wide.

DESCRIPTION: Spikes of light pink flowers pair with darker buds for a lovely two-tone effect from late spring to frost. Unique among Agastache

for its shorter, compact growth habit and dense blooms that cover the entire plant. Agastache is the ultimate pollinator perennial, adored by bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

BLOOM TIME: Late spring to frost

SPECIAL FEATURES: Attracts butterflies, pollinators and hummingbirds; easy care; compact form

GROWTH RATE: Fast

GROWTH HABIT: Upright

FLOWER ATTRIBUTES: Flowers for cutting, showy flowers

LANDSCAPE USE: Border; container

FLOWER COLOR: Pink



Photo by
Brandon Friend-Solis

Picture Purrfect Catmint

Nepeta 'Picture Purrfect' PPAF

PRONUNCIATION: NEP-eh-tuh

LIGHT: Full sun

WATER: Allow soil to dry slightly before watering.

SIZE: Reaches only 10 to 12 in. tall, 22 to 24 in. wide.

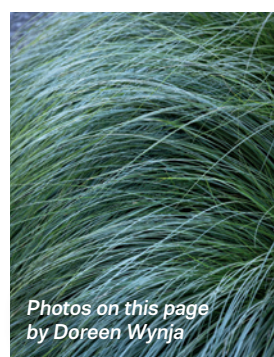
DESCRIPTION: A fantastic compact variety that bursts with bigger blooms earlier in

the summer. The vibrant color is a magnet for pollinators. With its short stature, it is an excellent choice for the front of borders or in containers. Herbaceous perennial.

BLOOM TIME: Early summer into fall

SPECIAL FEATURES: Attracts hummingbirds and pollinators

GROWTH RATE: Moderate



Fine China Sedge

Carex 'Fine China'

LIGHT: Full sun, Partial sun

WATER: Keep soil evenly moist.

SIZE: Reaches 8 to 12 in. tall, 24 in. wide.

DESCRIPTION: A fabulous evergreen grass that never has a bad day. Quickly grows into a mounding waterfall of fine, arching leaves. Performs wonderfully

in meadow gardens, or looks lovely spilling over the edge of raised beds or walls. Blooms but does not seed.

BLOOM TIME: Summer

SPECIAL FEATURES: Easy care; multi-season interest

GROWTH RATE: Moderate

GROWTH HABIT: Clumping

LANDSCAPE USE: Border; ground cover



Stars and Stripes Bulrush

Scirpus pendula 'Stars and Stripes' PP #37,140

LIGHT: Full sun, Partial sun

WATER: Keep soil moist to wet

SIZE: Reaches 18 to 24 in. tall and wide.

DESCRIPTION: A brightly variegated bulrush, with yellow centers and green edges. In summer, yellow stems emerge tipped with

clusters of flowers that look like fireworks. Native to wet prairies, this graceful plant is adapted to seasonal flooding and mild drought. A cultivated selection of a native plant. Perennial.

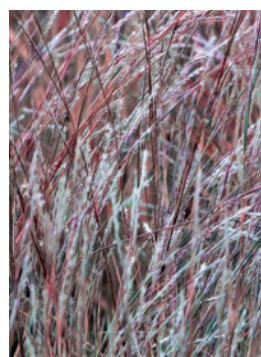
BLOOM TIME: Summer

SPECIAL FEATURES: Dramatic foliage color; benefits birds

GROWTH RATE: Moderate

LANDSCAPE USE: Border; ground cover; edging

FLOWER COLOR: Green



Smoke Signal Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium 'Smoke Signal' PP #27,433

PRONUNCIATION: ski-za-KRY-ee-um sko-PAIR-ee-um

DESCRIPTION: A strongly upright grass with a fabulous show of colors. The blue-green foliage takes on scarlet tones in late

summer, deepening to purple through the fall. Tiny tan seed heads develop in late fall. Tolerates hot, dry conditions. Excellent planted in groups, or alone as a vertical accent. Perennial.

BLOOM TIME: Early fall

GROWTH RATE: Moderate



Ginger Love Fountain Grass

Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Ginger Love' PP #26,442

PRONUNCIATION: pen-i-SEE-tum al-o-pe-kur-OH-deez

LIGHT: Full sun; partial sun

WATER: Water when top 2 inches of soil is dry.

SIZE: Reaches 2 to 3 ft tall and wide.

DESCRIPTION: Big, showy, upright, red plumes appear in late summer and persist through winter on this easy-care ornamental grass. Terrific contrast for

use in rock gardens, borders, foundation plantings, or in perennial beds. Herbaceous perennial.

BLOOM TIME: Late summer into fall

SPECIAL FEATURES: Easy care; water wise

GROWTH RATE: Moderate

FLOWER ATTRIBUTES: Showy plumes

LANDSCAPE USE: Border

FOLIAGE COLOR: Green

HISTORY: Introduced in 2013 by Intrinsic Perennial Gardens of Hebron, Illinois.



Honey Blush Rose

Rosa
'RUIRPP203A'
PPAF

LIGHT: Full sun
WATER: Water when top 3 inches of soil is dry.

SIZE: Reaches 2 ft. tall, 3 ft. wide.

DESCRIPTION: Bees rejoice; Honey Blush is the first rose introduced by Monrovia selected specifically because of its exceptional ability to attract pollinators. Large clusters of blush-pink buds open to white single blooms that will be absolutely buzzing. Attractive, elongated foliage grows from nearly thornless stems. This low-growing plant is perfect for mixed perennial beds or shrub borders. Deciduous.

BLOOM TIME: Spring into fall

SPECIAL FEATURES: Non-toxic to cats and dogs; attracts pollinators

GROWTH RATE: Moderate

FLOWER ATTRIBUTES: Showy flowers

LANDSCAPE USE: Border

FLOWER COLOR: White

ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS/ NATIONAL GARDEN BUREAU

AAS winners are flowers and vegetables that have been "tested nationally and proven locally." Each AAS entry is tested for superior garden performance by horticulture professionals across North America.



Photo courtesy of All-America Selections/
National Garden Bureau

Sedum spectabile Spectacular

AAS Perennial Winner

National Winner Garden

SPACING: 12-16 inches

DURATION TYPE: Perennial

HARDINESS ZONE: 3b-9a

LIGHT: Full

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

CONTAINERS: Yes

This exceptional Sedum spectabile grown from seed delivers the rock-solid garden performance typically found only in vegetative varieties. The plants are remarkably sturdy, full, and do not flop, maintaining a

tight, compact, mounded habit perfect for borders or containers. Noted for its excellent vigor and uniformity in both height and spread, this variety flowers slightly earlier than its comparisons. It produces generous, light pink flower clusters set against attractive, light green foliage, guaranteeing an excellent garden performer that provides reliable color and structure for your landscape.

Bred by PanAmerican Seed



Photo courtesy of All-America Selections/
National Garden Bureau

Zinnia Profusion Double White Improved

AAS Ornamental from Seed Winner

Gold Medal Winner

GARDEN SPACING: 15 inches

DURATION TYPE: Annual

LIGHT: Full sun; partial sun

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

HANGING BASKET: Yes

LOW EDGING: Yes

GROUND COVER: Yes

Need pure white color that holds up through the hottest summer? This

Gold Medal award-winning Zinnia Profusion Double White features impressive large, double flowers (2.5-3 inches in diameter) that create a lush, full look. Bred for superior performance, this variety is exceptionally sturdy, disease-resistant, and thrives in diverse climates, even enduring high night temperatures. Enjoy continuous color and an immaculate appearance from spring through frost, all without the hassle of deadheading. For a compact, powerful plant that is 14 inches tall and 20 inches wide, Profusion Double White is the ultimate choice for reliable, season-long beauty. Bred by Sakata Seed Corporation



Photos on this page courtesy of All-America Selections/National Garden Bureau

Coreopsis SunGlobe F1

AAS Ornamental from Seed Winner
National Winner

GARDEN SPACING: 15 inches

DURATION TYPE: Perennial

HARDINESS ZONE: 4-9

LIGHT: Full sun; partial sun

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

CONTAINERS: Yes

LOW EDGING: Yes

GROUND COVER: Yes

Bring brilliant, season-long color to your sunny spots with this outstanding Coreopsis. Praised by judges for its great habit and impressive bloom quantity, this variety is a true workhorse in the garden. It produces tons of fluffy, golden yellow, semi-double flowers on sturdy stems slightly earlier than comparisons. The plant maintains a tidy, com-

compact, and densely branching form, delivering multiple flushes of vibrant gold from spring through fall. Ideal for borders or containers, this Coreopsis is built to perform, making it a fantastic addition to any landscape.

Bred by Hem Genetics B.V.

Green Thumb Awards Winners, "People's Choice" for 2026:

ANNUAL: Sunflower Sun- finity Yellow-Red Bicolor

LIGHT: Full sun

PLANT HEIGHT: 3-4'

BLOOM COLOR: Yellow/orange

CONTAINERS: Yes

BEDS: Yes

HEAT TOLERANT: Yes

Sunfinity Yellow-Red Bicolor is a stunning new sunflower. It offers continuous blooms for up to 12 weeks of color throughout the summer, featuring beautiful burgundy shades that enhance its fall appeal.



PERENNIAL: Fescue Glow Sticks

HARDINESS ZONE: 3a

PLANT HEIGHT: 24-36"

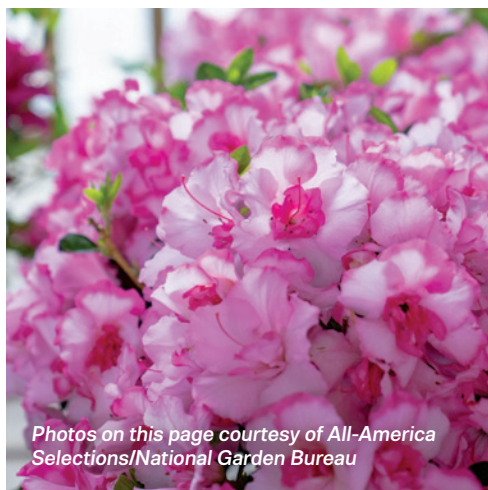
BLOOM COLOR: Yellow/
Orange

BEDS: Yes

DROUGHT TOLERANT: Yes

HEAT TOLERANT: Yes

Glow Sticks Festuca offers bright yellow flower spikes against dark green foliage year-round. Hardy to Zone 3b, this no-maintenance grass tolerates heat and drought, growing up to 36" in sun or shade.



Photos on this page courtesy of All-America Selections/National Garden Bureau

FLOWERING SHRUB:

Azalea Encore Autumn Kiss

HARDINESS ZONE: 6-10

LIGHT: Full sun; partial sun

PLANT HEIGHT: 3-4'

BLOOM COLOR: Mixed/Multi

CONTAINERS: Yes

BEDS: Yes

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

COLD TOLERANT: Yes

HEAT TOLERANT: Yes

This vigorous, easy-care mid-dwarf Azalea (zones 6-10) offers continuous spring-to-fall blooms. Autumn Kiss® boasts unique semi-double flowers with a romantic "kiss" of hot pink, establishing quickly with resilience.

**Green Thumb Awards Winners,
"Professional's Choice" for 2026:**

ANNUAL:

Dipladenia Sun Parasol FiredUp Coral

HARDINESS ZONE: 9-11

LIGHT: Full sun

PLANT HEIGHT: 18-24"

BLOOM COLOR: Red/Pink

CONTAINERS: Yes



BEDS: Yes

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

DROUGHT TOLERANT: Yes

HEAT TOLERANT: Yes

FiredUp Coral is a new, naturally freestanding thriller. This compact, upright Dipladenia features vibrant, coral-pink pinwheel blooms, providing a clean, modern focal point that doesn't require a trellis.

PERENNIAL:

Crocosmia Dark Fire

HARDINESS ZONE: 6-9

LIGHT: Full sun; partial sun

PLANT HEIGHT: 18-24"

BLOOM COLOR: Red/Pink

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY: Yes

Truly unique, Dark Fire Montbretia features smoky purple foliage and red/yellow flowers in summer. This vigorous perennial offers late-season color, attracts hummingbirds, and is deer/rabbit-resistant (Zones 6-9).



FLOWERING SHRUB:

Hydrangea Centennial Ruby

HARDINESS ZONE: 4-9

LIGHT: Partial sun

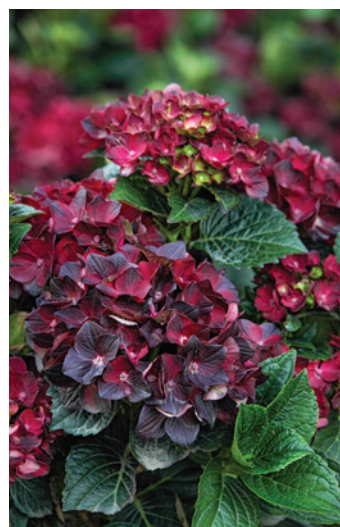
PLANT HEIGHT: 3-4'

BLOOM COLOR: Red/Pink

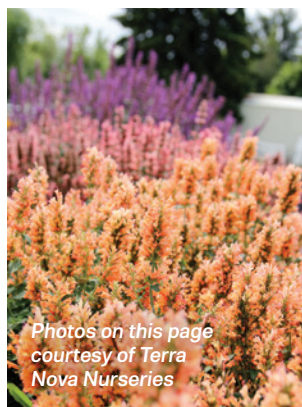
CONTAINERS: Yes

BEDS: Yes

This special 100th-anniversary hydrangea boasts stunning, long-lasting ruby-red mophead blooms that deepen with age. Centennial Ruby (Zones 4-9) is compact, sturdy, and features thick, deep green leaves.



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES



Photos on this page
courtesy of Terra
Nova Nurseries

Agastache 'Peach Pearl'

Agastache 'Peach Pearl,' companion to the popular 'Pink Pearl,' is smothered with bright, peachy-orange flowers that bloom from June through October and add brilliant color to gardens and perennial beds. It displays an excellent full, upright habit and offers downy mildew-resistant foliage. Hardiness zones for 'Peach Pearl' are 6-10.



Agastache 'Prince's Plume'

Agastache 'Prince's Plume' delivers a profusion of lavender-violet blooms from June through frost, combining long-lasting flower power with hardy, high-quality foliage. 'Prince's Plume' is deer-resistant, heat- and humidity-tolerant and a proven hummingbird and pollinator attractor. The variety's hardiness zones are 5-10.

Echinacea 'Fringe Festival'

Echinacea 'Fringe Festival' bursts with masses of thick, hot pink petals and lacks the traditional cone, giving it a bold look that sets it apart from other coneflowers. 'Fringe Festival' grows with a stocky habit and reaches a height of 8", width of 16" and flower height of 16", making it a worthy addition to full sun gardens, mixed beds and borders. Its hardiness zones are 4-9.

Heuchera 'Iridescent'

Heuchera 'Iridescent' lives up to its name with pearly foliage that changes from rose-pink to silver-lavender as the season progresses. Its shimmering foliage is complemented by soft-pink flowers. 'Iridescent' shines in the garden as well as containers; it also performs well as a blender and a standout in mass plantings, edges and borders. Hardiness zones for 'Iridescent' are 4-9. **SFM**



Coreopsis NOVA 'Sunstone'

Coreopsis NOVA 'Sunstone' has a fast and mounding growth habit and is covered with rusty peach to sun-tanned pink flowers. It's a powerhouse of great performance, presenting robust landscape value in mixed beds, borders, containers and mass plantings. NOVA 'Sunstone' blooms from June through October and its hardiness zones are 5-10.



UTVs

Cushman Hauler PRO ELITE

The Cushman Hauler PRO ELITE is built to handle a variety of tasks and duties around facilities, including maintenance, security, and event support. It has a total vehicle capacity of 1,200 pounds, an 800-pound bed load capacity, a 12-cubic-foot cargo bed with optional electric lift, and a towing capacity of 1,500 pounds. Powered by zero-maintenance Samsung SDI lithium battery technology backed by a five-year, unlimited amp-hour warranty, the fully electric Hauler PRO ELITE offers quiet, emissions-free operation with lower maintenance and operating costs when compared to ICE-powered vehicles. The optional IntelliGauge offers speed control and safety-lockout capabilities to prevent unauthorized use. The Hauler PRO ELITE can be customized with a number of accessories, including bed dividers, tool racks, and weather enclosures.



Kawasaki 2027 Mule SX

Kawasaki announced its 2027 Mule SX side x side lineup, a series of compact utility vehicles intended for jobsite and property maintenance applications. The two-passenger Mule SX models feature styling similar to the larger Mule PRO series. Compact machines are sized to fit in the bed of a full-size pickup truck for transport. The lineup is powered by a single-cylinder, 401cc four-stroke engine and includes a steel cargo bed with a textured floor. Kawasaki said the vehicles have a towing capacity of 1,100 pounds. The Mule SX series will be available in four configurations, including the Mule SX, Mule SX 4x4, Mule SX 4x4 ST and Mule SX 4x4 XC LE.



Kubota RTV-X long bed

Kubota Tractor Corporation expanded its RTV-X Series with the introduction of the RTV-X long bed model. The new model boasts a powerful Kubota diesel engine, VHT-X transmission, and a robust six-foot steel cargo bed with 1,212-pound capacity. Enhanced with a redesigned, aggressive exterior and new heavy-duty multipurpose tires, this model is available at authorized Kubota dealers. The RTV-X long bed features ProKonvert flatbed conversion, a hydraulic dump box, and exclusive cargo bed accessories, making it the ultimate workhorse for hauling and towing. Available in Kubota orange and RealTree Camo, the RTV-X long bed is engineered to help operators do more.

Toro Workman LTX

Toro introduced the all-new Workman LTX utility vehicle, which will replace the long-standing GTX Series. The Workman LTX is available in two powertrain options. The electric model is powered by Toro's HyperCell lithium-ion battery technology and comes standard with two batteries. A third battery can be added for operations requiring extended runtime. The gasoline model is equipped with a Briggs & Stratton Vanguard 400 EFI engine with integrated oil level sensors and an automatic engine shut-off feature to ensure long-term reliability. The Workman LTX features a sleek new hood, bumper, grille and headlights design. An all-new dashboard configuration provides two times more storage compared to the previous GTX model, while the change from a hand parking brake on the dash to a foot-operated or an electric parking brake option creates more space and overall intuitive design. **SFM**



JOHN MASCARO'S PHOTO QUIZ



ANSWER

From page 17

This area, at the 50-yard sideline, on a youth and high school stadium field shows healthy green grass in the center and brown worn turf surrounding it. The brown turf was caused by wear. The green area is protected by the 50-yard pylon, and the turf stays green under the marker. The area around it is where the coach's box on a football field is located. Six feet back from the sideline, a line is painted for the players to stay behind and that is also where the yard markers are placed. The players usually congregate around the pylon, concentrating on the 50-yard line and causing the wear. The sports field manager fertilizes the entire field as part of their regular field maintenance. His crew also aerates the field after the season, and the coaching areas are aerated heavier because of all of the players standing stationary in the box area.

Photo submitted by Matt Tobin, sales representative for Pioneer Athletics, and David Hart, superintendent of parks and cemeteries for the City of Brewer, Maine.

John Mascaro is president of Turf-Tec International

If you would like to submit a photograph for John Mascaro's Photo Quiz, please send a high-resolution digital photo to John Mascaro at john@turf-tec.com. If your photograph is selected, you will receive full credit. All photos become property of SportsField Management magazine and the Sports Field Management Association.



WORLD CUP 26 Q&A

SportsField Management magazine's exclusive interview with
FIFA Senior Pitch Management Manager Alan Ferguson

Photo by Mark Skalny

FIFA Senior Pitch Management Manager Alan Ferguson joined *SportsField Management* magazine Editor John Kmitta at SFMA Conference earlier this year to discuss World Cup 26. As the World Cup kicks off this month, we share excerpts from that interview, which originally appeared on the *SportsField Management* Podcast.

SportsField Management (SFM): You've been at the forefront with FIFA at the SFMA Conference for several years. Why has it been important for you and for FIFA to be involved with SFMA, the conference, and to share your messaging with its members?

Alan Ferguson: From the moment that the announcement was formalized that the World Cup would be coming as a triple host to the USA, Mexico and Canada, we were coming from the smallest tournament footprint in Qatar to the biggest edition with the expansion from 32 participating nations to 48. One of the first things that struck me was how are we going to do this? It's just a vast, vast tournament footprint. We were never going to be able to do it as we were structured in Qatar. But I knew through previous associations with people here in the U.S. and with the SFMA that's one way forward. I'm a member

of the GMA in the UK, so we have similarities and synergies there. I thought this was probably the most important connection we had to make early on, beyond the research facility that we did with the [University of Tennessee and Michigan State University].

I can't thank the SFMA enough for opening their doors, allowing us not just one time to open the general session, but three consecutive times. I'm not sure too many people have been afforded that privilege, but we very much see it as a privilege. It's been an honor to see 1,500 to 2,000 people sat in front of you from across the industry. As I alluded to in the general session, there's so many moving parts. I'm not ashamed to put my hand up and say maybe I underestimated the importance of the roles of some of these moving parts, particularly around the sod farmers. So it's been really useful for that; there's been a coming together, and a fantastic collaboration.

You have a number of global experts in the states, and lot of them are members of SFMA. So it's been absolutely invaluable. I can say without fear of contradiction that I wouldn't be sitting here in January 2026 feeling pretty good about myself and feeling pretty good about where we are —

having come out of the Club World Cup. It was a tournament in its own right, but it was a chance for us to stick our toe in the water. To see so many SFMA members who helped deliver Club World Cup and who will also deliver World Cup, and additional people who will come into those roles as well, is heartening and comforting in equal measure for me as FIFA senior pitch manager to know that we've got so many people all on the same page, all wanting the same objective to make this the biggest and best World Cup ever.

SFM: We've documented the efforts of FIFA, the University of Tennessee, Michigan State, and the years of research and testing that went into preparing for this to ensure a consistent, natural, safe playing surface. What are you most proud of with this multi-year effort, and what do you feel will be the lasting impact of World Cup 26 on the sports field management industry?

Ferguson: I think there are two or three things readily spring to mind. One of the biggest challenges with regards to the stadium selection for the tournament was that eight of the buildings weren't typically soccer venues. They are used to host NFL, and the configuration of their bowls was narrower than what we are typically used to picking up for an international FIFA tournament. So just seeing how these venues have adapted to be able to take in the FIFA regulation size field; but then to see how they typically play on synthetic on a concrete floor. There's not a traditional rootzone as we would want there. So the research teams came up with the shallow pitch profile. To see that rolled out in places like Dallas AT&T for the first time was just excitement off the scale for us.

Not everything goes to plan the first time out, and many times the researchers have to go back to the drawing board. They never quit, and I think it's a huge credit to the undergrads at both universities that they stuck to the tasks that we gave them. I remember going to my people in FIFA asking for the initial \$3 million. I never thought I would get it, I'm not going to lie, because they didn't know why I wanted \$3 million to research grass. Now they get it. When we had FIFA President Infantino at Tennessee last February, he hit me with a number of questions and things that he wanted to know ahead of a press conference that he was doing at UT. He was only supposed to be there a couple of hours, but four-and-a-half hours later, he was blown away and acknowledged genuinely how amazing it was.

So that was a big one for me, knowing that we're going to leave a legacy. And I've been keen not only to have UT and MSU for 2026, but that they stay our global research center for the 2030 tournament, the 2034 men's tournament, and also the 27 women's tournament in Brazil, and 31 in the U.S., Mexico, Jamaica and Costa Rica. So it doesn't stop here. I think that would be tragic. I think for the invest-



ment and money, time and effort, if we were to cut loose and go after the final whistle in July, I think that would be tragic not only for the industry, but for the football whole family as a whole, because not many lead bodies have invested in the science.

I knew we needed research. We had a small research center that was set up in Qatar for 2022, but it was much smaller scale because we were in one place — 74 miles from north to south, and you could see all 8 stadiums and all 32 training sites. Here is a different ballgame altogether. The model worked, and was a good idea, but it needed to be upscaled. The turf research universities here in the U.S. are widely, worldly renowned as leaders in that field. I think all we wanted to do was plug in to who had the best systems of research, who was the most advanced. And these two came out on top. I knew that we were a pretty safe bet going with both of them.

I remember sitting down with John [Sorocean] in the East End of London when he was over doing the NFL. I had just left Wembley and started with FIFA, I'd come through the Russian tournament, and I said to him, "This is my vision. This is what I see. Do you think you can deliver it?" And yes, he could.

So I think there's a fantastic opportunity for legacy, the research being one of them. So many of the build-



Photo by Mark Skalny

ings in America have quite a diverse business plan. They may have some soccer matches, some NFL matches, they might do some concerts. So they need to flip in and out throughout the year. I'd like to think that some of the research that we've brought to the market here in the United States will stay. We've had people at a number of venues speak to us, asking for specifications. We've been delighted to share that.

Then with the evolution of the MLS — many of the clubs are putting together hybrid pitches now because they have bespoke stadiums. We've been very happy to work and collaborate with that and connect them with people. So the networking just continues to grow, which can only be good for us as the world organization because that's what we should do. It's really great to see the MLS developing in the way that it is. You see players coming across from America to Europe, and Europe back to America as the seasons overlap. It might not be so much going forward when you realign with our season, but up until now it's been really good. And it's really good quality football on both sides. They're also talking about the quality of facilities being equal, and that never happened before.

When I had some of the press conferences at Club World Cup, some of the European guys, especially the younger ones, were caught out a little bit. They just didn't know what they were getting. But I remember listening to England striker Harry Kane and he said what a wonderful opportunity it was for players that were probably going to be at the World Cup to come over a year out, experience shallow pitch profiles, experience the heat, experience game delays because of adverse weather — all things that are normal in the U.S., but maybe not normal where they play the game.

So I think there's a number of fantastic legacy opportunities. These undergrads are going out into the industry to top jobs with stadiums, sod farms, or as consultants, and keeping that momentum going that's been built up. I think that will be the biggest legacy that FIFA can leave.

SFM: You have mentioned the challenges of managing this tournament across such diverse climates, across the three nations. Was there anything that stood

out to you in terms of the biggest individual challenges? Was there anything you were proud that this team was able to overcome and figure out.

Ferguson: I was really nervous about the domed stadiums, because typically we play in open-air stadiums and I know we had to change some of our regulations to accommodate that. But when you play in a domed stadium, you have to recreate the natural environment that the grass wants because we're not playing on synthetic, we're playing on real grass; we're playing on a living plant. You have to recreate airflow and light, and you have to manage moisture. That was really, really difficult. And I wasn't sure how we were going to do it.

I knew the research would kind of point us in the right direction. I never could have dreamt that it would be so comprehensive in what it's delivered. And I think that's where we'll be enormously in debt to the research teams for sticking to the tasks. There are more than 200 individual tasks that have been undertaken in the research period to give us that. And never has a tournament in the States had to deal with so many matches as the Club World Cup did. Typically, it's been one or two pitches and then it's been stripped out and a new layer of sod comes in. But for a player, it's the worst thing you can do because it breaks the consistency. It makes them a bit wary of what they're playing on. They don't get that feel coming through their feet, so their brain's telling them that they're not on the surface that they want to be on. We never got that. We got a bit of a complaint about fields being slow, but you know, we were playing in 40-degrees-plus (C) heat. We were kicking off in the middle of the day, so it wasn't a major surprise. But even out

of that, after the first couple of match days players said we need to water the pitches more. I'm thinking we just can't, because within 20 minutes of the game starting, the leaf's becoming dry. But then, I was sitting in the HQ in Miami, and when they stopped for a cooling break, I spoke to the competition colleagues and said, "Why can't the grass have a cooling break?" We got ahold of our directors, and within three or four hours, it was agreed that when the players stop for a cooling break, the grass gets a cooling break for the 12:00 and 3:00 kickoffs. So even that evolution in that short term has been really, really cool.

With the domed stadiums now, we've been able to understand how we can manage a consistent environment so the grass does think it's outside.

It could be baking hot outside, but inside, in Celsius, it's maybe 23 or 24 degrees. We're using cool-season grasses instead of warm-season grasses. The players will appreciate that because the biggest challenge for any tournament team is to get the pitches consistent over every stadium. That's 16 stadiums in three countries. You're coming from stadiums at altitude in Mexico, right through the U.S. up to Canada to Vancouver and Toronto. That's one hell of a challenge. But I think the guys and the girls have put us in a fantastic position to do that.

SFM: We've been discussing and looking ahead to World Cup 26 for a long time. You and your team and your partners have invested all this time and research. 2026 is here. What does the lead up look like?

Ferguson: It's the final stretch. I think we have the huge benefit of having had the Club World Cup. I would have loved all the venues to have been venues for the Club World Cup, because everyone involved in that

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would have had a chance to see us up close as an organization. It couldn't happen because of a number of reasons. But I'm a lot happier than what I thought I would be at this stage, because a lot of things that we did at the Club World Cup, like the shallow pitch profile and the work of the sod farmers. We only had five to six days to install pitches in stadiums [for Club World Cup]. Normally for a FIFA tournament, we have maybe 12 to 14 months. and that didn't happen. So you had to transfer that first part out to the farm. Seeing all that working and seeing that coming through as well as it did was really pleasing. We've been able to tell each stadium what they need to do. There's a broad agreement across the whole tournament footprint, which is unusual.

I don't think there's another event anywhere in the world that carries the commercial pressure on things like pitches to actually be there when they're needed. You know, we have marquee sponsors who want to make TV adverts halfway through the World Cup. We know that's going to come — that's normal in our life. But I think everybody's on the same page. So I'm sitting here reasonably relaxed. I never take everything for granted. I won't get complacent. I won't allow the team to get complacent because we're still working with nature. But I think we're ready. We've seen how diverse the climate here can be over the three countries. I think we know what we've got to do. We had super feedback from the teams in the Club World Cup about everything from playing in adverse heat to dry grass. So I'm quietly confident.

I think the U.S., Mexico and Canada will be able to look back on this day and say "Boy, did we deliver a cracking tournament."

I think it will be the spectacle that our president and council want it to be, that we want it to be. I think the U.S., Mexico and Canada will be able to look back on this and say, "Boy, did we deliver a cracking tournament."

A lot of people around the world that watch football, the millions that watch the game, will never know what's come out of these two research centers. The research has been the game changer, without a doubt. If we hadn't had that, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you today as relaxed as what I am.

SFM: Looking even further ahead, 2030 World Cup is going to be yet another historic effort. You prepare for a tournament across multiple continents. Can you share a little bit about what the planning for 2030 looks like at this point and how the lessons learned from World Cup 26 are going to impact your approach for 2030?

Ferguson: The 26 tournament is already benefitting 2030 and 2034. For our third field day at Knoxville in February we put together a futures group for hosts Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and Saudi to come to Knoxville to see the lighthouse building and speak to the research team. Work is underway in all of these countries on stadiums with an eye on the tournaments, but we need to have a consistency. I've seen some very futuristic things coming out of Saudi, which is great, but will they work in the cold light of day? So, we've already seen a transfer of knowledge from this tournament going to future tournament hosts. That's how it should be. When I look at the 2030 footprint, I've just come from Morocco toward the end of last year where we put the under-17 Women's World Cup. It's five years we've put it in Morocco for to allow the Moroccans to catch up and learn tournament football. They've built some fantastic stadiums, and they've already incorporated things like vacuum systems and hybrid stitching. They just need to understand now how to maintain that to the same high level that we're seeing over here. And that's the bit of knowledge transfer that's already started.

So already this tournament is hugely benefiting our future tournaments. and that will help FIFA to bring the consistency around our pitch requirements. Spain and Portugal are traditional soccer playing countries. In Argentina, we go down to River Plate for the 2030 tournament; it's one game, but the whole stadium has just been reconstructed. There is a little bit more to do in Uruguay and Paraguay for the single games, but we'll be able to deliver that. Then we drop back to Europe. So, already there's a really strong foundation being laid, but based on 2026. That passing of the baton is already well underway. I think it puts us — especially on the pitch management side — in a really strong position. **SFM**

Listen to the full interview, and other great conversations, on the SportsField Management Podcast, available via sportsfieldmanagementonline.com or on your favorite podcast platforms.

How to keep turfgrass consistent in 16 different World Cup stadiums

The FIFA World Cup 2026 tournament begins this month. One of the biggest challenges facing the turfgrass scientists at Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Tennessee is ensuring the consistency of the natural turfgrass across three continents, 16 cities and three distinct climate zones.

While Vancouver, Canada; Kansas City, Missouri; and Mexico City, Mexico are completely different cities, during the World Cup, the turfgrass in their stadiums must be consistent and feel the same to the world's elite athletes — whether they are playing the first game of the tournament or the final match more than five weeks later.

Dr. John “Trey” Rogers III, professor of turfgrass research in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, leads a team of researchers at MSU in collaboration with a team at the University of Tennessee, led by Spartan alum John Sorochan, Ph.D. MSU shared an interview with Rogers about how MSU has played a role in making sure the turfgrass is ready for gameplay. The following is an excerpt from that interview:

How are you ensuring the consistency of the turfgrass for the World Cup?

To make sure 16 different stadiums in three different climates play the same, we had to control everything from the exact mix of grasses, how the surface is built and reinforced, and the turf and soil specifications so the field is ready to perform and recover after every match.

What are the types and mixture of turfgrass used in the stadiums?

We developed the recipe for each of the sod farmers who grew the natural turfgrass used for the World Cup. Some stadiums are using a mixture of 84% Kentucky bluegrass and 16% perennial ryegrass. Other cities are using 100% bermudagrass, depending on the climate zone of the stadium.



How was the turfgrass grown at the sod farms?

The sod farmers used the seed mixtures we provided, and they grew the turfgrass on what's called sod-on-plastic. This idea isn't new, but when we used sod-on-plastic for the FIFA World Cup 1994 in the Pontiac Silverdome, it was a game changer.

Normally, when sod is harvested, it is cut from its roots, shocking the grass. This means that when the sod is installed, it needs time and lots of water to reestablish its root system. But when you grow sod-on-plastic, the entire root system is preserved. When the sod is harvested, it is rolled up like a carpet including the roots. At the stadium, the sod is unrolled and, once it is installed, it is almost ready for gameplay that same day.

The gameday readiness of the sod from the farm to the stadium keeps getting better. The way the sod is prepared at the farm eliminates the prep in the stadium, helping us with the one element that is not our friend in multiuse stadiums — time. This is one of the keys to our success.

How is sod-on-plastic transported from the sod farm to the stadiums?

Big rolls of sod measuring 30 to 40 feet long and 42 inches (or about 3 1/2 feet) are loaded into refrigerated trucks that hold an average of 10 to 15 rolls and driven to the stadiums. Some of the farms are close to the stadiums they are being installed in, but some aren't. One of the longest trips is from a sod farm in Colorado, which will transport the turfgrass all the way to a stadium in Atlanta.



How is the turfgrass strengthened or reinforced to withstand vigorous gameplay?

There are two ways the turfgrass is reinforced. One way happens at the sod farm, where a plastic fiber carpet is laid down as the turfgrass is grown. The other is a method for reinforcing the turfgrass after it's installed at the stadium. Green plastic fibers are stitched or woven into the turfgrass using a machine with needles spaced 1 inch apart to strengthen the turfgrass surface for gameplay.

How did you test turfgrass for gameplay?

We use machines like the foot lower extremity, or fLEX, machine, developed at UT, which simulates a 170-pound player during gameplay. The machine has a soccer cleat that strikes the turfgrass surface, and the information is displayed on a screen and available for analysis later so that we can test the wear-and-tear on the turfgrass.

We also use a ball drop machine that drops a soccer ball from 6 feet in the air, and we measure the audio of the ball hitting the ground and bouncing to learn more about how the ball is interacting with the turfgrass surface.

How do you keep natural turfgrass alive throughout the tournament?

There is a multilayered system under the turfgrass per FIFA's standards. All the stadiums must have an automatic irrigation system and grow lights to keep the turfgrass green for eight weeks.

In the fields that have permanent turfgrass, the first layer is sod followed by the reinforcement layer. The next layer is the turfgrass root system. This has 12 inches of sand to meet FIFA's specifications. The third layer is for drainage and includes 6 inches of gravel. Finally, there is a vacuum and ventilation layer that ensures the turfgrass gets air and any excess water is removed.

For the fields that will only have temporary turfgrass, the main differences are in the rootzone layer, which is 6 to 10 inches of sand to meet FIFA's specifications, and the drainage layer has 4 to 6 inches of gravel or a plastic drainage module called Permavoid.

How did you anticipate the athletes' expectations from the turfgrass and its performance?

These are the best soccer athletes in the world, so they understand if the turfgrass is too high or too low or if the field is a little soft. We have met FIFA's specifications and will support the 16 stadiums throughout the games so that the last thing the players worry about is the field.

National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), announced the finalists for the 2026 National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management.

Established in 1965, the National Gold Medal Award program recognizes communities across the United States that demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program innovation, professional development and organizational excellence.

The 2026 Gold Medal finalists are:

Class I (population 400,001 and over)

- Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Baltimore, MD
- Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation, Tampa, FL
- Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, Lake Worth, FL
- The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Riverdale, MD

Class II (population 150,001 – 400,000)

- City of Henderson Parks and Recreation, Henderson, NV
- Gilbert Parks and Recreation, Gilbert, AZ
- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Parks and Recreation, Lexington, KY
- Roseville Parks, Recreation & Libraries, Roseville, CA

Class III (population 75,001 – 150,000)

- Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation, Carmel, IN
- City of Allen Parks and Recreation, Allen, TX
- Lee's Summit Parks and Recreation, Lee's Summit, MO
- Mansfield Parks and Recreation, Mansfield, TX

Class IV (population 30,001 – 75,000)

- City of Kettering Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts, Kettering, OH
- City of Rockville Department of Recreation and Parks, Rockville, MD
- Glenview Park District, Glenview, IL
- Willamalane Park and Recreation District, Springfield, OR

Class V (population less than 30,000)

- Glencoe Park District, Glencoe, IL
- Itasca Park District, Itasca, IL
- Los Alamos County Community Services Department, Los Alamos, NM
- Valley City Parks and Recreation District, Valley City, ND

Armed Forces Recreation (Worldwide)

- MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, FL
- USAG Fort Bragg, Fort Bragg, NC
- USAG Fort Campbell, Fort Campbell, KY
- USAG Fort Knox, Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, Fort Knox, KY

Finalists compete for Grand Plaque Award, with recipients announced at the 2026 NRPA Annual Conference in Philadelphia, September 30.

Equip Expo expands 2026 Women's Leadership programming

Equip Exposition announced its 2026 programming dedicated to women in the green industry. The show's popular Women's Leadership Reception will feature media trailblazer Susan Packard, as well as Judith Guido, who is recognized as one of the highest-ranking women in the green industry. The event, sponsored by Belgard, SiteOne and Hunter FX/Luminaire, will take place October 22 at 4 p.m.

"Our women's programming offers a valuable opportunity to expand your network while engaging with influential women who are shaping and transforming the industry," said Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), the international trade association that owns and manages the trade show.

Packard, a media entrepreneur who helped create popular TV channels like HGTV, CNBC and Food Network, is one of the speakers for the Women's Leadership Reception. "I will be sharing the one factor that makes all the difference for employees to be happy at work, with stories and examples from creating HGTV, one of the fastest-growing programming networks in history," said Packard.

Fellow keynote speaker Judith Guido has spent her career building leading green industry companies, including taking one public on the NYSE. "Susan and I have both built executive careers in male dominated industries by delivering results and leading with resilience," Guido said. "We're passionate about and committed to helping women build careers and lives they never thought possible — through education, bold ideas, strong relationships, and smart problem solving — and we're excited to share our insights, experiences and what it takes to grow, lead and win in business and the green industry."

Previous participants consistently rank the Women's Leadership Reception as a must-attend experience.

"In a male-dominated industry, there's something powerful about a room where women can sit across from each other and understand the struggle without saying a word," said Sara Hey, president of Bob Clements International. "You don't have to explain the context. You don't have to translate. You just get to be in it together, learn from each other, and leave with a network of women who actually know what your day-to-day looks like. If you're coming to Equip, don't miss this one."

For more about the Women's Leadership Reception watch: https://youtu.be/xZV-MzX6_mo. **SFM**



SIS Pitches Unveils Bio-X

A new high-performance, 100% biodegradable fiber has been launched to help better manage end-of-life solutions for hybrid sports fields.

Bio-X is a hybrid fiber introduced by SIS Pitches to deliver true circularity for forward-thinking clubs and venues. Its formulation blends different state-of-the-art core components derived from natural sources to create a fiber with the strength, durability and flexibility needed to reinforce high-impact sports fields, while also being designed to biodegrade through industrial decomposition at the end of its natural life.

The formulation of Bio-X has a patent pending and results from the trial of more than 80 formulations across seven different countries. The result is a fiber engineered to meet the demands of world-class sport, including professional soccer, football, golf, tennis and cricket. Like conventional fossil-based polymers such as polyethylene and polypropylene-based hybrid fibers, Bio-X is designed to offer a durable playing surface that recovers quickly from intensive use. The fiber also ensures consistent performance for play but with the standout benefit of being biodegradable.

Each time a hybrid sports field is replaced, several tons of plastic fiber are removed from the surface — material that is costly, difficult to process and recycle, and often ends up in landfill, where it can remain for decades. SIS Pitches' Bio X fiber tackles this problem head on by giving clubs and venues a 100% biodegradable alternative that is fully traceable from manufacture to disposal.

Engineered to behave like traditional thermoplastics and certified for industrial composting, Bio-X offers a seamless transition to sustainable hybrid fields, with no persistent microplastics remaining after disposal. This is a key advantage for clubs and

venues subject to increasingly strict ESG reporting and compliance.

Bio-X is made using a proprietary blend of ingredients derived from corn and sugarcane plant sugars, as well as bacteria, which are converted into high-performance biopolymers, all of which meet the world's most stringent safety standards, including FDA Food Contact approval. Pigmentation, UV stability and ease of processing are enhanced through the addition of a unique biodegradable masterbatch, which is added to the formulation prior to extrusion through specialized machinery.

Bio-X integrates seamlessly into existing hybrid installation processes, with no extra specialist equipment required. The same applies to ongoing pitch maintenance, which can also be carried out with no change to the established routines applied to polyethylene or polypropylene-based hybrid pitches.

Bio-X fibers can be processed with green waste — without the need to separate — via industrial composting, which is widely available in most major cities and towns. This means Bio-X can lower field disposal costs at the time of replacement while providing a more convenient and more sustainable end-of-life option.

"Environmental sustainability has been central to many of the commitments we make as a business, from reducing our factories' energy consumption to recycling replacement fields," said Ivo Lamot, CEO at SIS Pitches. "We're acutely aware of the role we can play in reducing the impact sport can have on the natural environment too, which is where Bio-X can really make a significant impact."

Titan expands portfolio with premium rubber tracks for compact equipment

Titan International launched Titan Rubber Tracks developed specifically for compact track loaders and mini excavators.

"Our customers have been asking for Titan to enter this space, but we needed to make sure our tracks are as tough as our tires," said Travis Little, general manager, ag, construction, and industrial. "We've combined our rubber and engineering ex-



pertise to develop a rubber track option that meets our standards and works for our customers.”

Tracked compact equipment continues to play an increasingly important role across construction, rental equipment, and related applications where traction, stability, and uptime are critical.

Titan is offering a premium rubber compound specifically for these tracks. Internal testing and field evaluation focused on durability and consistency across a wide range of operating conditions, helping ensure reliable performance over the life of the track.

Kioti introduces new CK40 Series compact tractors

Kioti Tractor, a division of Daedong-USA, Inc., introduced the new CK40 Series compact tractors.

Designed for customers who need larger-tractor capability in a manageable footprint, the CK40 Series raises the bar in the compact category by combining advanced technology, enhanced performance, and all-day comfort in a platform optimized for demanding property maintenance and utility work. The tractors provide a versatile solution for customers who need one tractor to handle everything from mowing and loader work to snow removal and general property maintenance. With strong lift capacity, enhanced hydraulic performance, and operator-focused convenience features, the CK40 Series delivers dependable performance in a compact, easy-to-operate design that helps owners get more done with less effort.

Building on the proven capabilities of the CK20 Series, the CK40 offers heavy-duty lift capacity, improved implement control, and enhanced stability.

Durability and versatility are reinforced with a strengthened front axle, while updated front grille styling and LED lamps improve visibility and give the tractor a modern appearance that supports safer, more confident operation on the jobsite.

With a focus on operator experience, all CK40 Series models feature a first-in-class 10.25-inch color LCD instrument panel, providing clear visualization and a premium digital interface. Each model is powered by a Kioti three-cylinder Stage V diesel engine and offers simultaneous loader, mid-mower, and backhoe mounting capabilities. Additional highlights include an ergonomically designed single-lever loader joystick, available quick-attach loaders, a four-point backhoe connection for increased versatility, and a deluxe suspension seat.

All models come telematics-ready and are compatible with Kioti Connect, delivering real-time machine data and diagnostics so operators always know how their equipment is performing. With convenient access to information and support through a user-friendly app, owners can make informed maintenance decisions and simplify long-term ownership.

Cab models come standard with an LCD cluster display that provides additional telematics information and includes a Bluetooth radio, HVAC system, and rear-view camera to boost confidence when working in tight spaces.

SE models further enhance operator comfort with a tilt and telescopic steering wheel, seat cushion extension, and dual brake pedals. SE models also feature an enhanced lift valve that replaces traditional hitch controls, delivering smoother three-point hitch operation. Standard rear remotes and reinforced attachment mounting points improve durability and simplify implement installation across a variety of applications. **SFM**

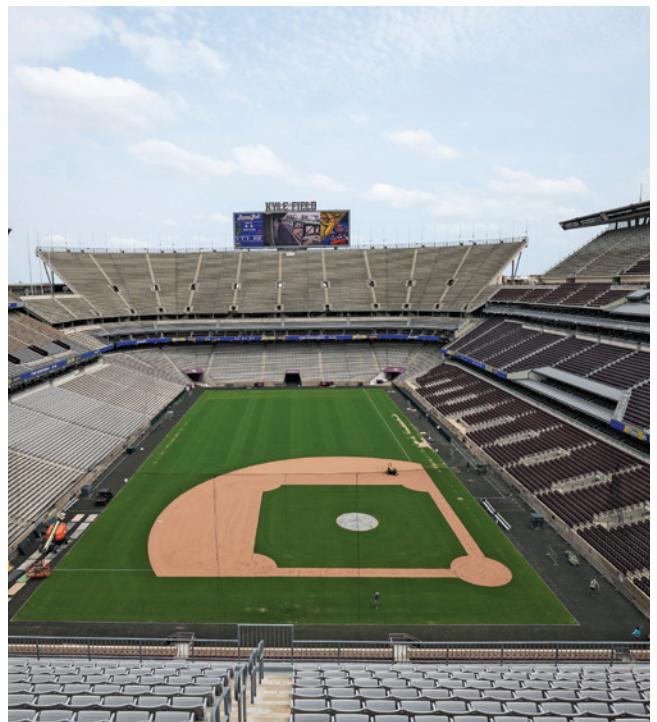


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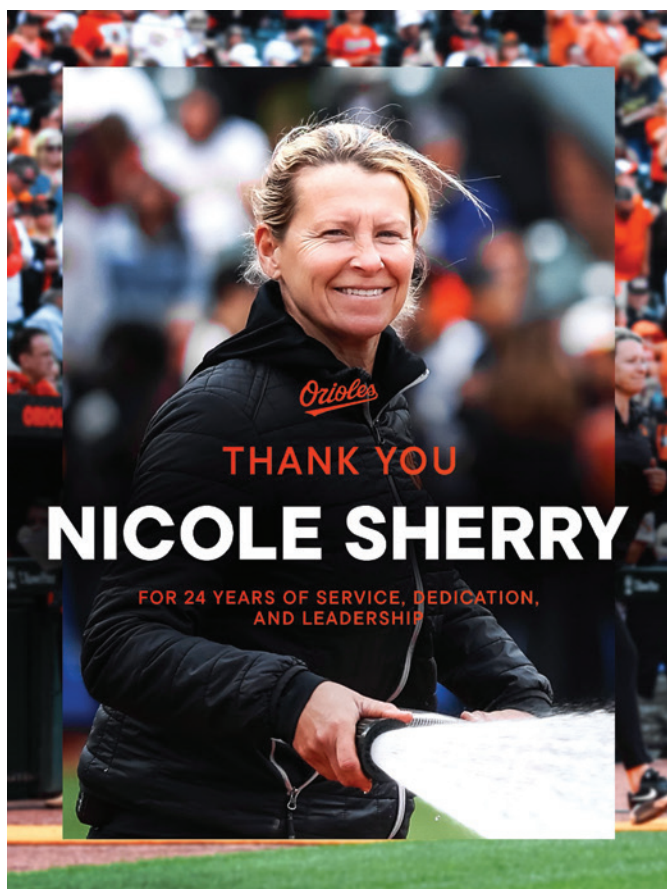


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Minnesota Park and Sports Field Management
Association: www.mpsfma.org

Mo-Kan STMA: <https://mokansfma.org/>

Nebraska SFMA:
<https://nebraskaturfgrass.com/about-nesfma>

New England STMA: www.nestma.org

North Carolina SFMA: <https://ncsfma.org/>

Northern California SFMA: www.norcalstma.org

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2026

JUNE 23-25

NATIONAL SPORTS SAFETY AND SECURITY CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Palm Desert, California

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

SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1

2026 NRPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<https://conference.nrpa.org/>

OCTOBER 20-23

EQUIP EXPO

Louisville, Kentucky

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

NOVEMBER 8-11

ELEVATE (NALP)

Tampa, Florida

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

NOVEMBER 8-11

TRANSFORM, THE PGMS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Tampa, Florida

<https://pgms.org/>

NOVEMBER 11-12

SALTEX 2026

Birmingham, UK

www.saltex.org.uk

DECEMBER 1-4

AMERICAN SPORTS BUILDERS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL MEETING

Tampa, Florida

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

DECEMBER 7-10

IRRIGATION SHOW AND EDUCATION WEEK

Las Vegas, Nevada

<https://irrigation.org/IA>

2027

FEBRUARY 1-4

SFMA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Tampa, Florida

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

FEBRUARY 15-18

TPI 2027 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FIELD DAY

Amelia Island, Fernandina Beach, Florida

<https://turfgrasssod.org/event/tpi-2027-international-education-conference/> **SFM**



2027 SFMA Conference

February 1-4, 2027

The 2027 Sports Field Management Association (SFMA) Conference and Exhibition will be held in Tampa, Florida.

SportsField Management magazine will once again be podcasting live from the conference, and will also present the 2026 *SportsField Management* Rising Star Award winners during the event. The January 2027 issue of *SportsField Management* will be the show directory distributed at the event.

ADVERTISERS: Plan now to secure your spot in the conference directory, and be sure to share your company's message across all *SportsField Management* channels throughout the year leading up to the industry's premier event.

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For more information about the
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