Where Have All the Turf Equipment Technicians Gone?

EREF—The Next Ten Years

2017 FTGA Membership Drive Kicks Off

Turf Seminars Coming to a Location Near You
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The Florida Turf Digest is a publication of the Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation, which provides scholarships to students in turfgrass and related studies in addition to funding turfgrass research and education for the Florida Turfgrass Association (FTGA). The FTGA serves its members in the industry through education, promotion and representation. The statements and opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the association, its staff, its board of directors, Florida Turf Digest or its editors. Likewise, the appearance of advertisers or FTGA members does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services featured in this, past or subsequent issues of this publication. Copyright ©2016 by the Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation. Subscriptions are complimentary to FTGA members. POSTMASTER: Send change of address notification to Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation, 411 E. Orange St., Suite 205, Lakeland, FL 33801. Postage guaranteed. Postage is paid at Pontiac, IL, Lakeland, FL, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A. Reprints and Submissions: Florida Turf Digest allows reprinting of material published here. Permission requests should be directed to the FTGA. Florida Turf Digest is not responsible for unsolicited freelance manuscripts and photographs. Contact the editor for contribution information.

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Publisher Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation
Editor-in-Chief MJ Plaster
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First, thank you for entrusting the office of FTGA president to me. I am here because of you, but more important, I am here to serve you. What an honor it is to find myself at the helm of this great association! The FTGA is made up of some of the finest individuals I know, not to mention the very best experts and professionals in the turfgrass industry. FTGA members are the reason the association is such a credit to the industry.

I look forward to working closely with the executive committee, the board of directors and the members to further our interests—the interests of all segments of the turf industry. The executive committee and board of directors are here for you, so feel free to pass along any suggestions to any one of us.

Looking Back to the 2016 C&S – Thank You One and All

Looking back at the 64th Annual Conference & Show, I realize this was the best C&S ever. Thank you to all who made time in your busy schedules to attend this year’s event. Continuing education is one of the pillars of your FTGA membership, and the educational lineup this year was not only informative but also as engaging as I have ever seen.

There are so many people to thank:

- Dr. Laurie Trenholm, who spearheaded the educational lineup. Not only did she bring together the very best in experts and professionals, she brought in Dr. John Stier from the University of Tennessee as our guest keynote speaker. Dr. Stier’s message was effective in shedding light on the challenges we face daily, and he offered solutions and inspiration for meeting those challenges head on. Thank you, Dr. Stier, for elevating keynote addresses to a whole new, engaging level.
- Our speakers, who brought us up-to-date on the state of the industry and the latest evidence-based research.
- The members of the FTGA Conference & Show Committee for their diligent work.
- Pete Snyder, outgoing executive director, for his support throughout the entire conference planning process.
- Heather Russo, who oversaw and coordinated the whole event, logistics and the staff on the ground. Her attention to detail is amazing.
- Golf Agronomics for their generous contributions to the FTGA.
- Our valued sponsors and trade show exhibitors. Without you, there would be no C&S or FTGA. We are grateful for the support you have given us over the years.

Continued on page 4
Continued from page 3

The C&S wasn’t all work and no play. This year’s golf tournament was the best in recent history, and we had an outstanding turnout. More than 100 golfers played the newly renovated Copperhead course as Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort.

One of the highlights of the FTGA Annual Meeting is the presentation of the Wreath of Grass, the FTGA’s highest honor. This year, it was awarded to Dr. Barry Troutman, retired University of Florida professor. Congratulations on a lifetime of accomplishment and dedication to the turfgrass industry.

Scholarships were awarded to three University of Florida students at the lunch on Wednesday. The future leaders are (drumroll please):
- Allison Bechtloff—Col. Frank Ward Memorial Scholarship
- Kaleb Lewis—Ralph White Scholarship
- Christopher Ryan—Bill Enwistle Sr., Scholarship

The food line at the corn boil was never-ending, but that wasn’t the main event—nor was the networking or the comraderie. The highlight of this year’s corn boil was the roast of retiring Executive Director Pete Snyder. He was stunned when we presented him with a trip to the Florida Keys. We managed to keep the secret, with no one spilling the beans ahead of time. Pete and his wife Karen can finally spend a few days relaxing together. Stay tuned for highlights of the roast and Pete’s sendoff in the C&S highlights in the next issue of the Florida Turf Digest.

2017 Turf Seminars
If you missed this year’s C&S, the Turf Seminars offer the same level of excellence in education. Next year’s Turf Seminars will be held at 12 locations around Florida from January 10 through March 2, 2017. See page 17 for dates and locations.

Full details will be available in the next issue of the Florida Turf Digest.

FTGA Membership Campaign
’Tis the season—time to become a member of the FTGA or renew your membership. The FTGA is introducing online membership and renewal applications to streamline the process. Rates remain at last year’s level. To be included in the 2017 Membership Directory & Industry Guide, the FTGA must receive your application by March 15, 2017.

Each year, you have the opportunity to take part in comprehensive educational opportunities at reduced rates: Turf Seminars and the Annual Conference & Show. As part of your membership, you receive the Florida Turf Digest and e-newsletters full of timely and practical news.

Our goal at FTGA is simple—to work hard, and sometimes vocally, to ensure a strong turfgrass industry for many years to come. Much of the work we do is behind-the-scenes in fighting the irrational forces that would destroy our industry if we were to let them. You are, of course, welcome to join us as we take on Goliath.

I invite you to renew your membership or to join the FTGA as we move forward to fight the good fight together to ensure our future in this industry.

2017 Conference & Show
Next year’s Annual Conference & Show returns to Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort September 25–27. The future will be here before you know it, so save the dates and plan to attend the best educational and networking event for the turfgrass industry.

Looking forward to the challenges and the successes in the year to come.
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It seems like every year, at the end of the summer, I sit back and evaluate the golf and turf industry and think about where we are. I notice things are not getting any easier. Today, I find myself looking for an assistant technician, as my last one has moved up, and it’s not going to be easy. Typically, I have found someone with mechanical promise on the grounds crew and just transferred him into the shop and trained him, but even

By Stephen Tucker,
Equipment Manager, Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World® Resort
that is more difficult these days.

In addition to the expertise issue, almost all of the equipment technician programs around the country have shut their doors, so we are left searching other industries, which are also hurting, trying to steal someone over to our industry. This is also easier said than done because, in order to steal qualified technicians, you need to have a nice carrot to dangle in front of them. Letting them know that the job requirements consist of grinding reels, electrical troubleshooting, hydraulic troubleshooting, welding, painting, equipment operation, organization, repairing small engines and diesel engines, etc., etc.—for some reason this tends to be a little overwhelming. Just about 10 years ago, the “work on the car with your dad” era, which defined my childhood, ended. This was the time in kids’ lives when they learned that they liked to work on things. Now, we are in the “take the car to the shop” era, and those kids will never discover whether or not they like to fix things.

If that isn’t enough, while the golf market is slowly coming back in most places, the costs are rising, with labor being one of the most expensive pieces of that puzzle. Qualified technicians are in the driver’s seat these days because there are so few around, and that has, and will continue, to raise the pay rate. That is good for existing technicians, but when we reach out to find some help, it’s a ghost town. As an example, one of my consulting client’s is now paying $15,000 more than he has paid in the past to employ a well-qualified equipment manager. It is not only difficult to find them but also today’s equipment is more sophisticated, and expectations continue to rise.

As an industry, we need to figure
out how to fix the problem. In 2007, I called a meeting with industry leaders who traveled to Lake City Community College (now Florida Gateway College) in Lake City, Florida, to discuss this issue before it became serious. (That program has since joined the growing list of closures.)

We had some great ideas to put the spotlight on technicians, and that has helped get us to where we are today with GCSAA. Now, equipment technicians are featured in regular columns in industry magazines and are being mentioned more in the “Big Three’s” publications, but it hasn’t helped to get new blood into our industry. We tend to cover our eyes to the issue until it becomes “our problem” or until the new answer becomes, “We will just pay more.” While some clubs have that luxury, many do not. This is the situation we currently face: We have to raise wages until we can get more willing and qualified technicians in the door.

At the end of the summer, there were 67 jobs for technicians on Turfnet alone! That doesn’t include the lower-paying positions that are utilizing Craigslist and multiple other local advertising options. I think it is important that, as an industry, we look at this growing issue. My facility will do what needs to be done to hire someone, but that doesn’t help all the other clubs that are hurting from a lack of talent in the shop.

**Solutions to the Technician Shortage**

The first solution I suggest is something we were working on with a college in Missouri. A few years ago, I visited a technical college in Missouri armed with, at that time, our International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association (IGCEMA) Certificate Program study guide. The intention was to provide the basic structure for a turf equipment management program. While in discussion with them, and due to my previous experience serving on the advisory committee at Lake City Community College, the one thing I have come to realize is people outside of the golf industry do not have the first idea about an equipment manager’s duties.

Unfortunately, I think that building a program with the “field of dreams” hope that “if we build it, they will come” was where our first mistake was made. The reality is that no one understands what the job entails, so how can we market it to potential students?

Then, when you look at the location of most of these colleges, they are not situated in highly concentrated golf towns; they are in small towns with little golf activity.

My suggestion to colleges that start equipment technician programs is this: Don’t put all your eggs in one basket, i.e., into the golf basket. Create a program for outdoor power equipment (OPE). That gives the program a broader audience of potential candidates. The basic education requirements are the same for both professions—just on a little different scale and with a few specialized needs for the golf industry, such as grinding. The first year curriculum would address OPE and would include all the crossover education that could then direct a student to the more specialized areas for the second year, such as marine, motorcycle, golf, etc.

Colleges with low student admissions could attract a core base of students starting out in OPE before directing students to specialized classes. Instructors could help steer students...
into a specialized direction based on their interests during their first year. This program structure would provide a greater chance of marketing success.

My next solution involves assistant golf course superintendents. I believe the market is saturated. Even with fewer students enrolled each year, the superintendent role isn’t for all of them. There should be a career path from assistant superintendent to equipment manager.

While I don’t see many assistants who are mechanically inclined, they should be able to take classes, at local colleges, local shows or even the Golf Industry Show, to pick up those skills. This would open the doors a little further, as far as options for these employees. Even if they chose to return to a superintendent position, the equipment manager experience would prove invaluable.

During my time as CEO of IGCE-MA, it became clear that the average age of technicians was around 50–55 years old. As they retire in the coming decade, we are going to have a real issue. I recently received two calls in one week from superintendents looking for technicians, and I don’t see those stopping. We have to do something, and coming up with solutions to the issue, I think, is a great start! But, it’s a conversation that needs to continue.

Stephen Tucker is a 1999 graduate of Lake City Community College (now Florida Gateway College). He has served as an equipment manager for the last 17 years. Currently at Tranquilo Golf Club @ Four Seasons Orlando, he is the former founder and CEO of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association, and the owner of Turfaddict.com. Tucker also provides turf equipment management consulting services around the United States and Canada at clubs such as Bluejack National, Bellerive Country Club and The National.
For the last four years, the Environmental Research & Education Foundation (EREF) has been focused on a mission of protecting Florida's environment and natural resources through the funding of environmental research and the sharing of sound scientific findings on the environmental and human-health benefits of properly maintained green spaces and urban landscapes.

During that time, EREF has raised more than $250,000, which has been and still is, dedicated to pursuing rational policy outcomes for the green industries in Florida and its home communities, mostly related to these key issues:

- Water use and water conservation
- Water quality and nutrient management
- Landscape design standards and prescriptive limits on plant material including turfgrass and landscape plants
- Agronomic and crop protection science

It is inarguable that in those four bullets are some of the most complex and challenging issues facing Florida today and for many years to come. The very fate of the green industry depends on how the industry addresses and responds to these challenges. Here are the two possible outcomes as seen by the EREF:

- Actively, persistently, collaboratively and fearlessly engage in public policy development by employing education and science-based solutions.
- Perish.

Is that an overstatement or hyperbole? Consider what has happened over the last several years—these are just a few of the more notable examples:

- Several major metropolitan counties on Florida’s east and west coast have enacted punitive and restrictive fertilizer blackout periods, disregarding industry BMP programs, education initiatives and peer-reviewed science. While some have pursued more reasonable winter ordinances, locations like Citrus County and Seminole County are looking right now at the old summer blackout model, and worse.

- Repeated efforts to garner legislative action to preempt and unify fertilizer policy in Florida have all failed—primarily due to the notion of home rule (where cities and counties are unwilling to cede any decisions to the state legislature). In a legislature where the green industry has no true champions, legislators have simply been unwilling to take on local governments which insist on having the option to deal with local water-quality issues on their own, no matter how unprepared or underfunded they may be.

- Catastrophic wildlife deaths—manatees, pelicans, dolphins—were blamed on urban fertilizer use without any evidence. When independent evidence was presented linking these deaths to other causal factors like septic discharges and unrelated viral illnesses, the damage was done and no media follow up ensued.

- Cities and counties have enacted or considered “progressive” landscape ordinances, sometimes embedded in building codes or other camouflage, which proscribe and/or prohibit specific landscape materials and practices—primarily with the intent of limiting turfgrass and non-native plant and tree materials.

- Elected officials in the Palm Beach County and Martin County area established the Coastal Ocean Task Force to examine efforts to protect Florida’s waters and reefs along its east coast. While many of its efforts are laudable, initial policies included duplicative efforts at establishing BMPs for golf and other green industry stakeholders with no such stakeholders included in the policy development process.

- Regional water supply planning across Florida has sent local governments and water supply authorities across the state scurrying to preemptively adopt restrictive irrigation and landscape models and “incentives,” which severely erode green industry market share without attempting to look at alternative measures and education. Think Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) and the Florida Water Star Program (now a mandatory turf-reduction program in the Toho Water Authority in East Central Florida).

- Water managers continue to habitually rely on clock and
calendar irrigation models (e.g., day-of-the-week watering) rather than to embrace water budgets, irrigation design standards and irrigation technology, which would reduce statewide irrigation significantly and very cost effectively. Beyond that, efforts to include efficient irrigation design standards in the Florida Building Code have met old-school resistance.

- Statewide water quality efforts continue to avoid addressing root-cause issues like septic contributions, lax wastewater and reclaimed water management, and atmospheric deposition as substantially more averse to Florida’s water quality issues than the illusory and mythical “low hanging fruit” of urban fertilizer use.
- Local governments continue to explore restrictions on glyphosate and other products using junk-science rationales, falsely correlating them with human-health impacts.

As one EREF board member recently stated, “Efforts to limit safe and science-based practices are becoming insidious in local-government policy making.”

Recent headlines about the massive algae blooms on Southeast Florida offer up a stark comparison between the perceptions and the realities of nutrient management in Florida. Take the following two scenarios which clearly illustrate the dysfunction of the current situation—Tampa Bay and the Indian River Lagoon.

**Tampa Bay**
Policy makers in the Tampa Bay area pioneered blaming urban landscapes for seagrass bed impacts and other bay illnesses. However, by their own reporting, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program’s (TBEP) glowing assessment of seagrass bed recoveries in the Bay reflects no discernable beneficial impact from those restrictive ordinances.

Even though this was well known to the TBEP and its allies, they nonetheless promoted the conduct of a self-serving, taxpayer-funded contract study by Applied Ecology to “prove” the effectiveness of the growing-season blackouts. The study was widely referred to in the Brevard County area growing-season blackout hearings as the once-and-for-all justification for those copycat ordinances. However, once the Applied Ecology study results were issued, it was quickly shelved due to its lack of substantive or statistically valid findings.

**Indian River Lagoon (IRL)**
Suffering from seagrass bed depletion and adverse lagoon impacts, local policy makers were frightened by unscrupulous environmental activists into believing that passing Tampa Bay-styled ordinances was the silver bullet to fix the IRL. In a way, who could blame them given the universal concern for their circumstances? Nonetheless, it is now crystal clear that the ordinances did nothing to even slightly mitigate the impacts now being felt again along the IRL. It was a bill of goods, plain and simple.

What is the point of all of this?

**EREF WAS RIGHT!**
Throughout these policy battles referred to above, EREF was providing testimony that the Tampa Bay “miracle” was no blackout miracle at all; it was the result of hard-nosed planning, massive Clean Water Act projects, industry BMPs, and education, all of which surpassed their goals. In the process of congratulating themselves in the media on the Tampa Bay seagrass bed recoveries, that’s exactly what THEY said.

EREF supported and promoted the extensive FDEP / UF/IFAS study on nutrient leaching (and EREF, along with other industry partners, funded additional post-doctoral research using the massive data base created by that study), which demonstrated the fatal flaws in growing-season blackout policy, despite desperate efforts by certain environmental activists to change the subject to “runoff,” which was always seen by the rest of the world as a non-starter. It should be noted that enlightened local governments are now embracing the idea of dormant-season (winter) blackouts, consistent with the FDEP / UF/IFAS study’s findings.

For over two years, EREF monitored the above-mentioned Applied Ecology “study” to its narrow and scope-limited conclusion. Ultimately the only meaningful outcome of the study was that education might help residents better understand landscape and nutrient management. EREF repeatedly and emphatically promoted an education-first approach (at no cost) to the Hillsborough County EPC before the expensive and wasteful study was approved. It is interesting to note that the TBEP promoted the study as a way to “prove the need” for blackouts, even after it authored and advocated for the west coast blackout language years before. That looks to be a conflict of interest that should not be lost on any reasonable person observing these matters.

EREF communications and presen-
tations noted from the organization’s outset that agronomic and crop protection chemicals would be a target of activist policy makers. In 2016, the City of Miami Beach began a process of evaluating a ban of glyphosate use from all public areas based on the debunked carcinogenicity allegations of the World Health Organization’s “International Agency for Research on Cancer” (IARC). While not proceeding with the ban, the chilling effect of such tactics by environmental activists and their policy-making allies, which exploit the public’s legitimate worries about human-health impacts, are unfortunate—in other words, science schmience.

EREF has advocated from its inception that collaboration and education were the keys to real change to behaviors related to irrigation and nutrient management. Collaborative efforts with Associated Industries of Florida demonstrated that potential but were short-lived due to legislative inaction. National corporate entities like Scotts Miracle-Gro have launched major efforts and investments on precisely that notion (see Scotts’ Water Positive Landscapes).

What Now?
In a real world that is governed by indisputable natural law, somebody has to stand up against the forces that use populist notions and junk science to make environmental policy. Sadly, railing against urban fertilizer or corporate farming or crop protection chemicals, all in the name of protecting people and the environment from a perceived harm, will get you some press coverage and can even garner the status of a “movement.” That is precisely what has happened to the green industry and its stakeholders—it has been successfully targeted as “low hanging fruit” by those who have promoted these populist notions and who have created a powerful and well-funded movement. The efforts by EREF and its allied trade organizations to offer scientific and rational alternatives have slowed it down and, even in some cases, turned it back. But its nature is relentless, and the need to stop it needs to be equally so. National efforts like Scotts are incredibly helpful, but ultimately, they are principally for Scotts, as they should be.

“What Now” is that the industry, through EREF and its trade partners, needs to step up its efforts to match the relentlessness and persistence of the groups whose ultimate goal is nothing less than seeing managed urban landscapes disappear from the face of Florida.

What Do We Need To Do?
Before EREF, green industry trade organizations were each doing what they continue doing today—devoting association dues and sponsorship dollars to advocacy and research to whatever extent they reasonably could, given their missions, which are primarily devoted to marketing, education and member benefits.

With the coming and passage of the Great Recession, the very nature of trade organizations at all levels has been challenged financially as stakeholder budgets were stripped of these “discretionary” expenditures. While recovering somewhat in the last few post-recession years, association budgets are still tight, while attacks on the industry and the related need for advocacy are orders of magnitude greater. At the same time, the budgets of environmental activists remain strong and their members are emboldened by the policy victories they have obtained and what they may perceive as an inconsistent and uncoordinated green industry response to their efforts. The stakes for the green industry could not be higher.

EREF represented an evolution in advocacy, and a new brand of green industry efforts to mobilize around common issues and the development of a consistent science-based response—and one voice. For the first time, the leaders of the major green industry trades and their key suppliers recognized the ever-increasing severity of attacks on the green industry and developed a game plan to begin to resist those existential threats. To the credit of those with the vision to see that EREF was not a challenge to their individual trade association objectives, EREF launched its current efforts to promote green industry science and to leverage the talent and resources of its stakeholders to achieve some much-needed push back.

Arriving at the present for EREF, a quarter of a million dollars and a lot of effort and battle scars later, it is a natural time for EREF to reevaluate its model as the policy-making world has also evolved.

The initial funding model for EREF was based on a voluntary funding approach. In this model, industry stakeholders would voluntarily make contributions to EREF, in the form of (1) an outright contribution or pledge; or (2) an “industry assessment” fee of six-tenths of 1 percent of their turf fertilizer purchases through participating fertilizer distributors. In a few instances, certain organizations “self-assessed” the industry assessment and paid in the calculated amount periodically. While raising $250,000 through this model is a great outcome, it falls far short of projections and expectations. The answer to
“why did it fall short” can be answered best as follows:

Preservation of funds for advocacy and research, versus administration, has been a hallmark of EREF. Accordingly, EREF has never had the luxury of having a dedicated sales or administrative support function to enhance collection outreach efforts. Signups have been on the basis of word of mouth and exhortations by EREF principals at trade association meetings and other such venues.

High-profile challenges (like growing-season fertilizer blackouts), which generate a lot of “buzz,” have given way to still serious but more “insidious” challenges which can fly under the radar. (Note that this is the intent of such measures—to go unseen until it is too late.) This has diminished the impulse opportunities to support EREF out of immediate self-interest, which is completely understandable behavior, particularly when stakeholder budgets are still resistant to “discretionary” spending like dues and support.

Finally, in the form of a true confession, EREF has done an underwhelming job of communicating and working with its participating distributors, leaving them with uncertainties about the program and its go-forward prospects. In addition, there were certainly instances of stakeholders who believed they had signed up but were never on the official rolls. These issues require straightforward and easy fixes to be implemented by EREF. Given these factors, the board of directors of EREF has held in-depth discussions about the best future for EREF. The board and those working closely with EREF continue to hear strong support for its mission and work program, particularly with the increased emphasis on education and research, along with its traditional base of advocacy and outreach. Backed by continued energetic support from green industry trade organizations, EREF will be re-engaging with its stakeholders and Florida fertilizer distributors to explore how to put EREF on a stable and continuous financial footing that will allow it to compete with the enormous resources and deep-pocket activists arrayed against the green industry.

The work done by EREF to date must not be allowed to diminish. Rather, it needs to accelerate to achieve parity with those activist organizations whose goal is to undermine the green industry and the hard-working people, the jobs and the companies it represents.
2017 FTGA Membership Campaign Kicks Off

Membership in the Florida Turfgrass Association (FTGA) is based on a calendar year. Over the past months, we have worked diligently to upgrade our database to a new system—YourMembership. It reduces paper and postage expenses and makes it more convenient to register for events and renew membership online. The next issue will feature a tutorial.

To be included in the annual FTGA Membership Directory & Industry Guide, membership applications and renewals must be received by March 15, 2017.

The association is dedicated to education, research and the promotion of environmentally responsible, professional and scientifically based management practices for turfgrass.

The FTGA relies on the revenues derived from membership to continue its work. As an umbrella organization that represents all aspects of the turfgrass industry in Florida, the FTGA advocates for the industry on important legislative and regulatory issues. It provides a voice for the industry to educate state and local leaders, consumers and the media about the turfgrass industry and the many benefits of turfgrass.

The association is dedicated to education, research and the promotion of environmentally responsible, professional and scientifically based management practices for turfgrass.

Member Benefits
FTGA members receive member pricing on all FTGA programs (up to a 50 percent savings over non-members). This includes discounted rates on registration fees, trade show booths and sponsorship opportunities at the FTGA's flagship, multi-day Conference & Show, which features education, industry updates, networking and continuing education unit (CEU) credits.

FTGA members are entitled to discounted registration fees at local Turf Seminars, sponsored by the FTGA during the months of January, February and March. (See page 17 for locations.) The Turf Seminar program is available at 12 sites around the state. The seminars include up-to-date research, education, new products, CEUs (GCSAA, FDACS, CCA) and a catered lunch.

To be included in the annual FTGA Membership Directory & Industry Guide, membership applications and renewals must be received by March 15, 2017.

FTGA members receive a free print subscription to the FTGA's magazine, Florida Turf Digest, featuring timely research updates, turf management articles and news of significance to the turfgrass industry as well as periodic and timely e-newsletters. In addition, members receive the annually updated FTGA Membership Directory & Industry Guide, which is a great way to locate industry contacts.

Two Membership Types
The FTGA offers two types of membership, each with different price points depending on your industry involvement.

Individual memberships belong to the individual, with member recognition and member pricing extended to the individual alone. Individuals can take advantage of FTGA membership benefits, including member pricing on all FTGA programs and events. The FTGA has six different types of individual memberships: active members, technicians, academic and extension, not-for-profit and municipal, students and retirees. Individual membership is available at $200 for each active member. Some individual membership categories are lower priced.

Group memberships provide both individual and organizational recognition at a reduced cost. These memberships belong to the organization (e.g., golf course, corporation, municipality, etc.) and allow all employees of the organization to receive member pricing on all FTGA programs (up to a 50 percent savings over non-members). Group memberships provide for recognition of the organization and the employees that it chooses.

The FTGA has four different group membership plans:

- Not-For-Profit, Association & Municipal group memberships at $200 per year, which allow for recognition to the organization and two employees. Additional employees can be added for $35 each.
- Basic group memberships at $375 per year, which allow for the organization and two employees to be recognized as FTGA members. Additional employees can join at $125 each (versus a $200 active individual membership).
- Premium group memberships at $750 per year, which allow for the organization and up to five employees to be recognized as FTGA members. Additional employees can become members at $75 each.
- Premium-Plus group memberships at $1,500 per year, which allow for the organization and up to 15 employees to be recognized as FTGA members. Additional employees can be members at $50 each. Premium and Premium-Plus group members will receive special recognition in Florida Turf Digest. It’s now your turn to become an FTGA member. Please support the association that supports you and the turfgrass industry. Thank you.
**INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Application must be received by 3/15 to be included in the Membership Directory & Industry Guide

### Business Contact Information

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Update Business Contact Information (if any information is incorrect above, please indicate below)

### Membership Type (check one)

| Active | $200 |
| Technician | $75 |
| Academic & Extension | $50 |
| Not-For-Profit, Association & Municipal | $50 |
| Retired | $35 |
| Student | $35 |

### Industry Category (check one)

| Architects/Consultants/Property Mgmt. | Golf |
| Crop Protection/Nutrients/Soil Enhancements | Nursery/Sod Production |
| Equipment/Irrigation/Drainage | Lawn/Landscape/Pest Control |
| Municipal/Schools/Sports Fields | Specialty Products/Services |

Would you be willing to serve on a Board or Committee?

Please Donate to our Special Projects

- FTGA Young Professional Network $10
- Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation $30
- FTGA Industry Advocacy $50
- Environmental Research & Education Foundation $50

Payment Information (select one form of payment, check or credit card)

Application must be submitted with check or the check will be returned

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FTGA Membership Dues</th>
<th>Total Additional Donations</th>
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Total Amount Due $ __________________________

Check Information

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Credit Card Number

Exp. Date _____ / _____ Sec. Code _____

Full Billing Address

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Florida Turfgrass Association  www.ftga.org  15
# GROUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Application must be received by 3/15 to be included in the Membership Directory & Industry Guide

## Business Contact Information

<table>
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<td>Primary Member</td>
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<td>Phone</td>
<td>Fax</td>
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</table>

## Industry Category (check one)

- Architects/Consultants/Property Mgmt.
- Crop Protection/Nutrients/Soil Enhancements
- Municipal/Schools/Sports Fields
- Lawn/Landscape/Pest Control
- Equipment/Irrigation/Drainage
- Specialty Products/Services

## FTGA Group Membership Type (check one)

- **Not-For-Profit, Association & Municipal** $200 Includes two employees; additional employees can be added for $35 each
- **Basic** $375 Includes two employees; additional employees can be added for $125 each
- **Premium** $750 Includes five employees; additional employees can be added at $75 each
- **Premium - Plus** $1,500 Includes up to 15 employees; additional employees can be added at $50 each

## Please Donate to our Special Projects

- FTGA Young Professional Network $10
- Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation $30
- FTGA Industry Advocacy $50
- **Contact me, I would like to participate in EREF,** Environmental Research & Education Foundation
- **Would you be willing to serve on a Board or Committee?**

## Payment Information (select one form of payment, check or credit card)

Application must be submitted with check or the check will be returned

| FTGA Dues               | $_________________
| Add Employees           | $_________________
| Total Additional Donations | $_________________
| Total Amount Due        | $_________________

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## Full Billing Address

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<tr>
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<td>Name</td>
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Orlando Jan. 25 | Venice Mar. 1
Cocoa Jan. 26 | Estero Mar. 2

The Florida Turfgrass Association hosts 12 Regional Turf Seminars throughout the state of Florida. These seminars provide local educational programs on topics such as pests and diseases, weeds, BMPs, regulatory issues, safety and pesticide usage. Attendees will receive CEUs in both core and turf and ornamental categories as well as Certified Crop Advisor Credits and GCSAA PDI Points.

SAVE THE DATE
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Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort

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65th Annual Conference & Show
From the Executive Director

By Pete Snyder, Executive Director

Happy Trails

It is with some sadness that I write this, my last “From the Executive Director” column because I really don’t want to say “goodbye” to the Florida Turfgrass Association and the many friends I’ve made during my tenure here.

Feeling nostalgic, I thought back to the song “Happy Trails,” written by Dale Evans Rogers, which she and Roy sang as they rode off into the sunset. It definitely expresses the right sentiment.

It is a good time for me to ride off. I want to spend more time with my wife of 43 years to remind me why we got married in the first place. As corny as it may sound, she is still my best friend. Karen has put up with jobs that have kept me away from home far too much in those 43 years.

It is a fun time for me to ride off. I want to spend more time with my grown kids and their families. Count on it—I will spoil the heck out of my grandchildren and then skip town for my kids to deal with the young terrors I will have created.

It is the right time for me to ride off. After many years as the sidekick, Heather Russo is ready to step up into the lead role of executive director. Please trust me, I’ve seen Heather in action—she is more than capable to do this job. No one is better at member relations than Heather. Just give her a chance. And, with MJ Plaster back as editor of the Florida Turf Digest, that very important aspect of the job is made that much easier.

It is the best time for me to ride off. My strength was advocating for the turfgrass industry. However, my “take no prisoners” approach often resulted in heightening emotions—not good. The challenges before us today require patience and a studied approach. We couldn’t be in better hands than with Mac Carraway’s leadership of the Environmental Research & Education Foundation (EREF). I ride off knowing that Mac will calmly and coolly address the “black hats” who challenge our industry.

Make no mistake about it; the challenges facing our industry will continue to mount. The challenges will be characterized by emotional appeals, verging on hysteria and totally devoid of peer-reviews. The black hats will cherry pick through mountains of data, ignore the preponderance of science and present questionable, out-of-context snippets. As an example, consider the challenges that glyphosate (Roundup) currently faces. In March 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published a monograph that reviewed the carcinogenicity of glyphosate and several insecticides. That review was driven by one man, Dr. Christopher J. Portier, who was trained in mathematics and biostatistics, not scientific research.

Based on three epidemiology studies (that were cherry-picked out of a mountain of research) and memory recall, the panel determined there was limited evidence of carcinogenicity in humans for non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Based on IARC’s criteria, glyphosate was listed as a probable carcinogenic to humans. IARC’s review was a hazard assessment, not a risk assessment. In other words, it infers that maybe glyphosate could cause cancer. It does not state it would cause cancer (hazard vs. risk).

Excluded from the glyphosate review were experts who had worked with or for industry, had accepted research funding from industry, or had consulted with or for industry. Likewise, the review also excluded any paper or study that included industry-generated data, had industry funding (in part or whole) or included industry scientists. Ignored in all of this is the fact that the review was driven by a man who had a huge conflict of interest. Dr. Christopher J. Portier is a senior collaborating scientist with the anti-pesticide organization, the Environmental Defense Fund. Why was this fact hidden?

We see similar selective research techniques by turfgrass antagonists in Florida. Agenda-driven activists and social scientists present themselves as experts in fertilizer, leaching and run-off. Based on their testimony, and not on the testimony of noted experts in the field from the University of Florida, many local municipalities across the state have enacted onerous and restrictive fertilizer ordinances.

As I write this, Citrus County is considering the most onerous ordinance to date—eight months of fertilizer
blackouts along with other restrictive provisions. Yes, the current draft allows for exemptions for licensed professionals, but they could disappear when activists fight them. This is a very slippery slope—not only in terms of disappearing exemptions but also in terms of what other municipalities may do with blackout periods. Citrus County is doing it—why not us?

Activists like to portray the turfgrass industry as a very large, monolithic entity—the Goliath picking on defenseless environmental interests. This is so wrong because we are the true environmentalists—environmentalism is a science, which we rely on (and not emotion) to guide our actions.

Furthermore, the turfgrass industry is not monolithic. We are many entities and individuals: dozens of sod producers, hundreds of golf course superintendents, thousands of sports turf managers and tens of thousands of lawn care operators and property managers. Being so splintered, we are an easy target.

We must be more united as an industry. We must have the financial resources it takes to fund the turfgrass research we need and to embark on a meaningful industry advocacy campaign to counter the wrong-headed negatives. EREF is the right vehicle, and it needs your support. Please consider an “opt-out,” voluntary contribution so that more participants are helping to fund the industry that provides you a living.

As I ride off, I want to thank all the association members and corporate partners who have supported me: the turf team at UF for helping to educate me, past presidents for their guidance, numerous board members for their insights, and the 12 individuals who have given unselfishly of themselves on the Executive Committee (Darren Davis; Todd Himelberger; Greg Pheneger; Mac Carraway; Armando Campos; Mac Briley; Erin Wilder; Robby Clemenza; John Mascaro; Bill Kistler; Andy Jorgensen; and, most recently, Brad Holler). But mostly, I want to thank Heather Russo for her undying dedication to the FTGA.

I came from production agriculture, and will return to production agriculture. This will help me keep an eye on the various agronomic challenges you are facing, “... 'til we meet again.”

Pete

THE END of an era… and the beginning of a new one.

“It is with a sense of sadness that we bid Pete a fond farewell and wish him well in his retirement.

Pete gave me the confidence and strength to evolve into the role of FTGA executive director. Through the years, Pete has been a mentor, taught me how to overcome challenges and provided me with the knowledge to run the association.

On behalf of the FTGA membership, thank you, Pete, for your dedication and leadership.”

~ Heather Russo, FTGA executive director

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~ Heather Russo, FTGA executive director
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