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VOL. 38 / NO. 5

Fall 2020

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Photo credit: Landscape of CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass, planted December 2019.
Photo courtesy of Susan Schwartz.

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.

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■ **Postmaster:** Send change of address notification to Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation, PO Box 14836, Bradenton, FL 34280. Postage guaranteed. Postage is paid at Orlando, FL and Bradenton, FL. Printed in the U.S.A.

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www.ftga.org

Publisher

Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation

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Florida Turf Digest is the official publication of the Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation Inc.
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President's Message

By Dr. Eric A. Brown, FTGA President

Taking Care of People and Plants

As the Director of Agronomy for Massey Services, I describe my job as taking care of people and plants. My company, our association and our customers are a collection of people who need continual support. Plants in our urban landscapes, sports turf facilities and golf courses need care and maintenance to survive and thrive, just like people. The FTGA grants us a partnership to achieve these objectives. I ask for your support of time and money for our association for the betterment of us all.

I am a second generation FTGA president, following in the footsteps of my father, Dr. Max A. Brown, who served as president of our association from 1985–1987. I am born of turfgrass culture and have had the pleasure of working on golf courses, including the Fort Lauderdale Country Club and University of Florida Mark Bostick Golf Course. I enjoyed the opportunity of working as a turfgrass manager at the University of Florida NCAA Softball complex and worked as a private turfgrass research consultant. All of this has led me to find my home at Massey Services where I focus on maintaining urban landscapes and green spaces. I have found that taking care of people and plants are tenets for success in all segments of our green industries.

Tough times don't last...tough people do. Despite the challenges we have faced in 2020, we have seen strength, resolve and commitment for our industry, association and our communities. Florida ranks No. 1 in the nation for turfgrass-related economic activity, with revenue contributions of more than \$14 billion and employment encompassing roughly 150,000 jobs (*Economic Contributions of the Turfgrass Industry in Florida*. Khachatrayn and Hodges, 2020). The FTGA continues to advocate for and promote the turfgrass industry with research, education and opportunities for turfgrass professionals to network with their colleagues. A strong association will continue to benefit us all as we move forward through these uncertain times together.

The future of the FTGA is in the hands of its members. 2021 is full of uncertainties for us, and for our association as well. Now, more than ever, our association needs your support. If we continue to focus on the small details of taking care of people and plants, our future will be bright. 🌱



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(Continued from page 4)

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From the Executive Director

By Heather Russo, Executive Director

Thank You & Goodbye 2020

Finally, 2020 is coming to an end—hallelujah. It seems like the longest and most challenging year known to man. 2020 started off as the association expected, and the turf seminars, membership and Turf Day on the Hill all went as planned and budgeted. But soon, this little thing we call “COVID” really rocked our world, our industry, our association and our personal lives. But here we are, with hopefully, a new perspective on life.

Not having an annual conference this year was peculiar—first year I haven’t planned a big event in 16 years (14 years with the FTGA) and not stressed during the summer. Well, that was odd. The Executive Committee and I had to quickly think of other ways to make sure the members still received their education and CEUs. We hosted three educational webinars during the summer, and they were well attended. The FTGA held the annual golf tournament, and the turnout was wonderful. It was nice to see industry people in person, to catch up with what is going on with their businesses and how this year has impacted them. One thing that I found to be a common denominator is that everyone had something positive to say. Many commented they were thankful for their health, their family, their jobs and for coming out of their office to network.

I’ve had many questions on what we are doing for the turf seminars. The seminars will begin at the end of February and conclude in March. More than likely they will be in a hybrid, in-person and webinar format. Many companies still have strict travel restrictions, and we just do not know how 2021 will pan out at this time. Nevertheless, the association will continue to put on quality education for our members and offer an array of credits for your licenses.

The 2021 membership campaign has begun. As I write this column, our database has had its ups and downs for the past week. If you did not receive the membership email renewal or are experiencing problems going online to renew, please send me an email (heather@ftga.org) and I will be happy to manually renew your membership. Hopefully, it will all be resolved here soon, but you never know with technology.

I want to thank all of you as members for your continued support. I am very blessed to be in this industry among great people. I hope that these last two months of this year will be good to you and your family.

Happy holidays and goodbye 2020! 🌱

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Figure 1. Landscape of CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass, planted December 2019. Photo credit: Susan Schwartz.

2020, a Year We Will All Remember

We have all experienced our share of challenges and adjustments in our personal and professional lives. During the spring semester I was teaching AGR 3303, Introduction to Genetics. This is a large class with 300 students. I'll never forget coming back from spring break with messages explaining that because of COVID-19, instructors needed to think about how they might convert their classes to an online format before the end of the semester; and then, the next day, letting us know that we needed to be fully online within a week. I had never taught online and had an exam scheduled during this time frame that also needed to be delivered online. Both students and teachers overcame steep learning curves very quickly. Not long after, for safety reasons, research activities were reduced to those identified as essential to maintain irreplaceable resources. Needless to say, finishing the academic semester and helping students was the focus of my work activities through early May. To help manage and keep our breeding program moving forward we were thankfully allowed to keep some employees working from alternative locations. I had employees propagating and taking care of hundreds of grasses at their homes. This allowance was critical for us to keep things moving forward and for meeting deadlines for funded projects. The dates are hazy, but at some point, in May, UF began to reengage research activities. Thankfully, my employees were eager to get back to working in the lab, greenhouse and field. Following are updates on CitraBlue™ St. Augustinegrass and a few research projects.



*By Kevin E. Kenworthy, Ph.D., Professor,
Agronomy Department, University of
Florida, Gainesville*

CitraBlue

CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass (Figure 1 and cover photo) was commercialized in late 2018 and is under expansion with multiple sod producers throughout Florida. CitraBlue was released for having an improved drought response, better shade tolerance, reduced incidence of gray leaf spot and better color compared to Floratam St. Augustinegrass. We have since learned that because of its growth habit, CitraBlue can be mowed less frequently and is more competitive against weeds compared to the upright growth habit of Floratam. Dr. J. Bryan Unruh, located at the West Florida Research and Education Center (WFREC), Jay, Florida, recently screened CitraBlue for its tolerance to conventional herbicides labeled for use on St. Augustinegrass and has shown responses equivalent to Floratam and Palmetto®. Therefore, you can feel comfortable applying the same herbicides to CitraBlue that you are currently using on Floratam, Palmetto, Seville, Bitterblue or Classic. While most producers are expanding CitraBlue there are some growers that have sod available for sale. Please visit www.floridaturf.com to locate producers of CitraBlue and other types of sod produced in Florida.

Fairway Trials

For several years, the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association has sponsored fairway and putting green trials of bermudagrass and zoysiagrass at the Plant Science Research and Education Unit (PSREU), Citra Florida; the WFREC; and at the Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center, Davie, Florida. In 2019, new fairway trials of both species were established using plugs at PSREU. Each trial includes 27 entries, planted in 10 x 10 ft plots with three replications (Figure 2). The bermudagrass trial contains 18 experimental lines and the following commercial cultivars: Tifway, Celebration®, TifTuf™, Bimini™, Latitude 36®, Tahoma 31™, NorthBridge®, Landrun and Iron Cutter. The

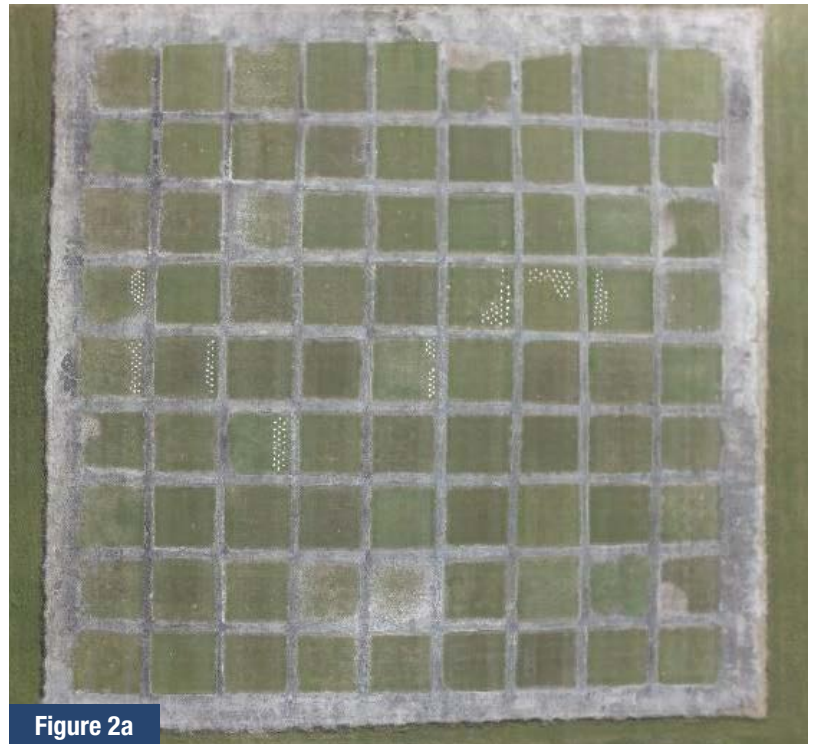


Figure 2a

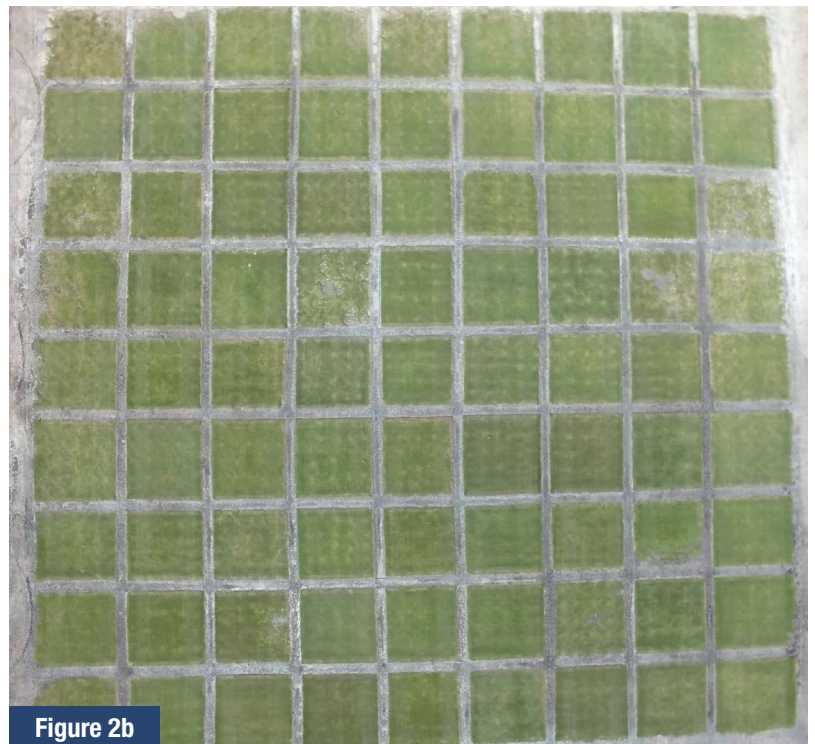


Figure 2b

Figure 2. Aerial images of the 2019 bermudagrass (Figure 2a) and zoysiagrass (Figure 2b) fairway trials. Aerial photo credits: Joseph Giuliano.

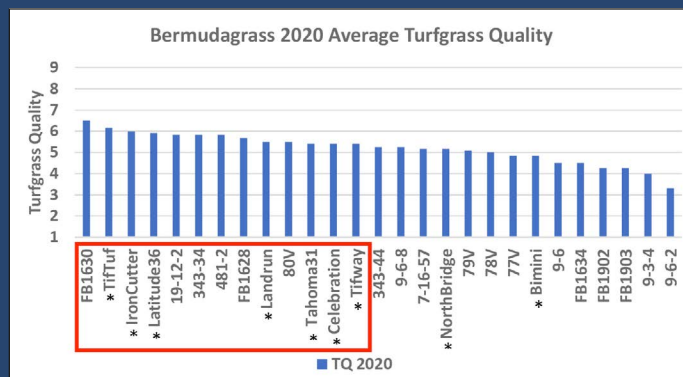


Figure 3. Average 2020 Turfgrass Quality of 27 bermudagrass entries planted in 2019 at PSREU in Citra, Florida. Commercial cultivars are indicated by an *. Turfgrass quality was visually rated using a 1 to 9 scale, where 9 equals a perfect plot and 1 equals a dead plot. Entries inside the red box are in the top statistical group.

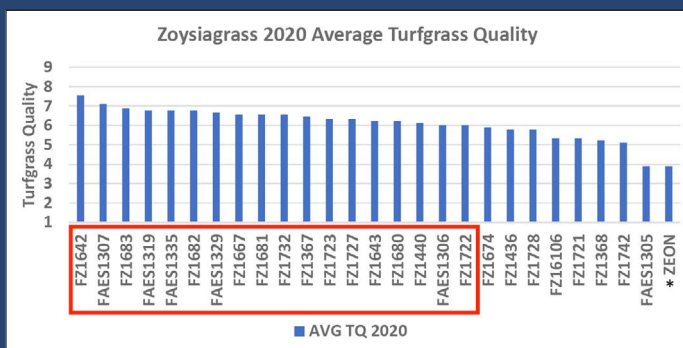


Figure 4. Average 2020 Turfgrass Quality of 27 zoysiagrass entries planted in 2019 at PSREU in Citra, Florida. Zeon (*) is the commercial check. Turfgrass quality was visually rated using a 1 to 9 scale, where 9 equals a perfect plot and 1 equals a dead plot. Entries inside the red box are in the top statistical group.

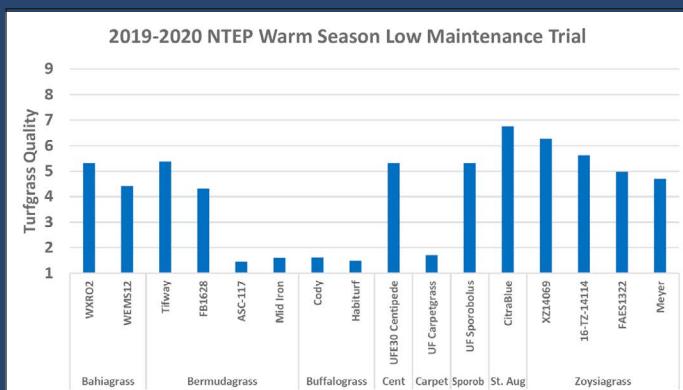


Figure 5. NTEP 2018 Warm Season Low Input Trial average turfgrass quality from 2019–2020. Official trial entries are Tifway, FB1628, ASC-117 and Midiron bermudagrass; Cody and Habiturf buffalograss; and XZ14069, 16-TZ-14114, FAES1322; and Meyer zoysiagrass. Additional local entries are WXR02 and WEMS12 bahiagrass, UFE30 centipedegrass, UF carpetgrass, UF sporobolus and CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass.

zoysiagrass trial includes 28 experimental entries and Zeon® as the only commercial cultivar. The plots completed their establishment through 2019 and early 2020 with turfgrass quality ratings beginning in 2020. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the average 2020 turfgrass quality ratings for bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, respectively.

TifTuf and an experimental line, FB1630, were the only bermudagrass entries that averaged > 6 for their 2020 turfgrass quality; however, statistically they were similar in quality to 11 other entries. The top statistical grouping (see red box in Figure 3) contained seven commercial cultivars and six experimental entries. Bimini's reduced performance is due to the presence of nematodes. The field was fumigated prior to planting, but the Bimini plots were planted using plugs obtained from a previous field trial that contained nematodes. The trial will be treated for nematodes so that Bimini can be evaluated more fairly.

In the zoysiagrass trial, Zeon was one of the slower entries to establish, which has impacted its turf quality ratings (Figure 4). Two entries, FZ1642 and FAES1307, averaged turfgrass quality > 7 through 2020. Sixteen other entries rated 6 or above and fill out the remainder of the highest statistical group (see red box in Figure 4). These grasses range in texture with some having a medium leaf texture and others as fine or finer than Zeon. FAES1307 will soon be commercialized as CitraZoy™ zoysiagrass. It offers an improved winter color, good rate of spread, improved shade tolerance and shows less incidence of large patch disease. It will bring a new medium-textured option in the zoysiagrass market for use in landscapes. We don't expect to recommend it for use in golf course fairways, but it could fit well in shady tee surrounds or rough margins where bermudagrass thins out. Its color will blend well with most bermudagrasses on the market. CitraZoy™ is not expected to be commercially available until 2022.

NTEP Warm-Season, Low-Maintenance Trial

In 2018, the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) sponsored a warm-season, low-maintenance trial. The trial is planted at 11 locations across the southern U.S., including a location at PSREU. The trial has ten official entries including Tifway, FB1628 (UF entry), ASC-117 and Midiron bermudagrass; Cody and Habitu[™] buffalograss; and XZ14069, 16-TZ-14114, FAES1322 (UF entry); and Meyer zoysiagrass. The trial at PSREU includes six additional local entries from UF: WXR02 and WEMS12 bahiagrass, UFE30 centipedegrass, UF carpetgrass, UF *sporobolus* and CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass. For this trial, weed control was only performed during the first year. Beginning in late 2019 no weed control has occurred on these plots. The trial is mowed once per week at 3 in and is fertilized annually with 2 lbs of nitrogen per 1000 ft². The average turfgrass quality from 2019–2020 is found in Figure 5. Several entries aren't well adapted or competitive against the weed pressure. These include ASC-117 and Midiron bermudagrass, the two buffalograss entries and the UF carpetgrass. The seeded bermudagrass and carpetgrass haven't been competitive against weed pressure; whereas, Midiron bermudagrass and the buffalograss entries are not adapted to Florida's climate or soils. All other entries range in turfgrass quality from 4.3 to 6.8. CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass has the highest turfgrass quality. It and XZ14069 zoysiagrass are the only entries rated > 6.0. For reference, Figure 6a contains a picture of weed-free CitraBlue next to weed-infested ASC-117. Three additional UF local entries are competitive for their turfgrass quality. This group includes WXR02 bahiagrass, UFE30 centipedegrass and UF *sporobolus*. *Sporobolus* (*Sporobolus virginicus*) is native to Florida, found growing in salty marshland. It is fairly competitive against weeds (Figure 6b). 🌱



Figure 6a



Figure 6b

Figure 6. Pictures illustrating competitiveness against weeds from the 2018 NTEP Warm-Season Low Input Trial. (Figure 6a) left foreground ASC-117 and right foreground CitraBlue; (Figure 6b) UF *Sporobolus*. Photo credit: Kevin E. Kenworthy.

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EXPERTS FOR GROWTH



Summer Webinars & Fun in the Sun



(L-R) Bryce Gibson, Josh Kelly, Todd Ronske and Richard Hughes.



(L-R) Andy Jorgensen, Ralph Dain, Chase Grandone and Erica Chaney.

This year it wasn't Irma; it was COVID-19. During the lead-up to the Conference & Show, much of the country hibernated, but outdoor recreation never ground to a complete halt in Florida. Golf courses remained open, albeit with some restrictions. Those with outdoor jobs continued to work while others worked from home. Indoor gatherings were limited in Florida, so the FTGA conducted its business virtually.

Instead of holding the annual Conference & Show at an upscale resort, members gathered around their computers for several Summer Turfgrass Webinars via Zoom—two CORE CEU presentations and two general presentations.

Presentations

We would like to offer our thanks to Susan Haddock, Hillsborough County Extension, and Dr. Bonnie Wells, Brevard County Extension, for their CORE CEU presentations, "Drift Management Minimization Planning" and "Pollinator Protection in Pest Management Programs," respectively.

Our thanks also go out to UF faculty Dr. Marco Shiavon and Dr. Kevin E. Kenworthy for their presentations, "Environmentally Friendly Irrigation & Nutrient Management Strategies for Florida Lawns" and "ProVista & CitraBlue St. Augustinegrass, New Options for Florida Landscapes," respectively.

Other Events & Awards

The annual meeting and installation of officers was also virtual. The FTRF scholarships (see Summer 2020 *Florida Turf Digest*, <https://adobe.ly/3kUMxYA>, page 25) and the Sod Solutions Golf Course of the Year (see page 16) were awarded behind the scenes this year. Trade shows do not lend themselves to a virtual environment, but our intrepid vendors will find other ways to inform customers of their new products and services.

One event did not radically change: The annual FTGA golf tournament. This year, a scramble tournament took place. In addition to the tournament, this year's Wreath of Grass was awarded at the event (see page 15).

FTGA Golf Tournament

The FTGA held its annual scramble November 2 at Reunion Resort & Golf Club – Watson Course. Congratulations to the winners:

1ST PLACE GROSS: Jim Staub, Rickey Craig, Chris Anderson, Billy Gamble

1ST PLACE NET: Jason Nugent, Tom Dively, Bob Blum, Alan Shaffer

2ND PLACE NET: Mike Giddens, Shane Willey, Dustin Plemons, Jimmy Evans

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Meet the 2021 FTGA Executive Committee and New Board Members



President
Dr. Eric A. Brown, Massey Services

Dr. Eric A. Brown is director of agronomy for Massey Services Inc., based in Orlando. He earned his doctorate from the University of Florida's Soil and Water Science Department, specializing in soil and plant relationships and environmental stewardship. He spends time as a technical trainer and formulates Massey's agronomic program through research and testing, to ensure healthy, vigorous landscapes that help protect our environment. Dr. Brown is an ISA Certified Arborist and has taught horticulture-related classes as an adjunct professor at various higher education institutions, including Rollins College, Valencia College, Seminole State College and Santa Fe College. The Browns have two children and reside in Orlando.



Vice President
Lance Tibbetts, ABM

Lance Tibbetts is a New England native that currently holds a position with ABM Industries. He has a vast knowledge of northern and southern landscaping and turfgrass. With a degree in horticulture and soil sciences and a 12-year veteran Certified Sports Turf Manager,

Lance sees the value in understanding turfgrass management from Division 1, nationally ranked schools to municipal parks and athletic fields. While living the dream in Central Florida, Lance likes to make himself available to new horticultural enthusiasts and 30-year veterans such as himself. Lance resides in Leesburg, Florida, where he lives with his wife, kids and two dogs. His free time is spent mostly doing home renovation projects and exploring the state of Florida with his wife.



Secretary/Treasurer
Jason Frank, Harrell's LLC

Jason Frank was born and grew up in Deland, Florida, where he started his turf career in high school running his own lawn service with a friend. His passion for turf grew, and he eventually attended the University of Florida, where he received his B.S. in turfgrass science

with a minor in business administration in 2005. He then went to graduate school at UF under the direction of Dr. J. Bryan Unruh and received his M.S. in horticulture sciences with a minor in agricultural and biological engineering. During his master's study, he researched and wrote a thesis titled "Detection of Turfgrass Stress Using Ground Based Remote Sensing."

After receiving his M.S., Jason accepted a position as an assistant superintendent at Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples. While there, he earned his MBA from Florida Gulf Coast University in 2011. He then

Wreath of Grass Awarded to Andy Jorgensen, CGCS



Team Massey Services.



Team Quality Turf.



Team SiteOne Landscape.



Florida Turfgrass Association member and past president, Andrew Jorgensen, CGCS, has been honored with the Florida Turfgrass Association's highest award, the Wreath of Grass. Usually, the honor is awarded during the annual FTGA Conference & Show. This year, the award was presented at the FTGA Golf Tournament.

The coveted Wreath of Grass award pays tribute to individuals who have shown outstanding service to the Florida Turfgrass Association and to the turfgrass industry.

Ian Rodriguez Ph.D., immediate past president of the FTGA, says, "I have seen Andy go far above and beyond the call of duty for the association and industry over the past several years and can't think of a more deserving recipient of the Wreath of Grass. Few people have such a good feel for the pulse of the industry, and I'm glad that we can honor him for his service."

Andy has served six years on the Florida Turfgrass Association Board of Directors and also serves on the Environmental Research & Education Foundation board. Currently, he is the vice president of the Florida GCSA, director on the Seven Rivers GCSA board, and involved locally with Leadership Ocala/Marion through the Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership.

"I am honored to be chosen as the recipient of the Wreath of Grass. My career in this industry over the previous 20 years has been nothing but spectacular, simply due to the wonderful people I have worked with along the way. This industry is like no other, and I am very appreciative of this honor," says Andy. 🌱



(L-R) Dr. Eric A. Brown, Heather Russo and Andy Jorgensen.

transitioned to a career in sales with Bayer Crop Science, where he managed several distributor accounts for Bayer. During this time, he received a third M.S. degree in soil and water science from UF. Through the relationship with his client, Harrell's LLC, Jason was given the opportunity to take on the role of Florida regional director in turf and landscape for the company, where he currently serves.

Jason is a member of the FTGA, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association, and Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association. He has also achieved his Certified Professional Agronomist and Certified Crop Advisor through the American Society of Agronomy as well as Certified Horticultural Professional through the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. He lives in Lakeland, Florida, with his wife Brielle and sons, Boden and Tatum. In his spare time, he enjoys golfing, hunting and fishing.



Immediate Past President
Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., Control Solutions Inc.

Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., was born and raised in Tampa, Florida, and is currently a Technical Service Manager at Quali-Pro / Control Solutions Inc. After graduating from the University of Florida, he began working in the landscape industry on the Gulf Coast. A few years later, he returned to UF to pursue a master's degree, studying turfgrass science and was among the first student residents of the Turfgrass Environtron.

After completing a Ph.D. at Clemson University, he returned to Florida where he became an instructor in the Golf and Landscaping programs at Florida Gateway College in Lake City for eight years. In 2012, Ian moved to South Florida to begin working for ValleyCrest/BrightView, where he provided technical support in agronomy, horticulture, and pest control before joining Quali-Pro in 2019.



New Board Member
Jimmy Evans, P.P.M. Sports Turf

FTGA member Jimmy Evans has been president of P.P.M Sports Turf, located in Tallahassee, Florida, since 2018. P.P.M. Sports Turf manages pesticide, fertilizer and cultural applications on athletic fields and golf courses. The team helps to provide quality playing surfaces by utilizing integrated pest management along with proven agronomic practices. Prior to his current position, Jimmy was the golf course superintendent at Killbuck Country Club from June 2002–February 2018, with additional responsibilities including building maintenance and construction projects. Jimmy graduated from Florida Gateway College in 2002 with an Associate of Science degree in golf course management. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Jimmy enjoys spending time with his wife Claudia and their two children, Addison and Beau.



Sod Solutions Awards North Palm Beach Country Club "2020 Florida Latitude 36® Course of the Year"

By **Katie Wagner**

When Cory Adams took the role as superintendent of the North Palm Beach Country Club golf course (<https://village-npb.org/453>), it wasn't in great shape. In a lot of ways, it seemed like the environmental conditions of the course would prevent almost any turf variety from flourishing. The course sits on a sand ridge—not the best foundation for growing healthy, green grass. Nematodes, notorious for attacking root structures, were an ever-present issue. Pile on top of that the extreme Florida heat and humidity, and the conditions of the North Palm Beach Country Club course seemed to be the perfect storm of setbacks.

With so much work to be done, management felt that Adams might decline the position. Undeterred, he took the job and found that by trouble-shooting issues one at a time, the course began to improve. The turfgrass on the golf course was Latitude 36 Bermudagrass (<https://sodsolutionspro.com/grasses/latitude36-bermudagrass>). The grass was struggling so much

that there was talk of needing to replace it altogether. Latitude 36 was developed to push the upper limits of the transition zone, and some questioned whether it could perform in the hot, humid climates of South Florida. The other issue was the sandy soil, which can be difficult for many varieties.

Adams thought it over and ultimately concluded that with the right maintenance and care, he believed Latitude 36 would not only do well but also would thrive and offer players an outstanding golf experience. Features like its color and playability make Latitude 36 perfect for a golf course application; it was just a matter of figuring out how to make it work in an environment with so many setbacks.

The first thing he had to handle was implementing an organic nutrition regimen. From there, he put a plan together to deal with the nematodes and ramped up the irrigation system to address the sandy soil. Coming up with a program for moisture retention made all the difference, according to Adams. Within a few months, the dry, dead-looking patches that had been plaguing the

Addison King presenting the award to Cory Adams.

course upon Adams's arrival disappeared, and a green, healthy looking golf course began to take shape.

Today, one of the main draws of the North Palm Beach Country Club course is the playability (the grass). Unlike other bermudagrasses, Latitude 36 has an upright growth pattern which creates the perfect foundation for golf play. From a maintenance point of view, Adams loves this feature because it requires fewer cultural practices, and the upright growth pattern maintains itself. The ball sits up high on Latitude 36, which golfers love. The green color and beautiful texture of the grass provide fine aesthetic appeal which is highly sought after in the golf industry. Adams is proud to offer what he believes is truly the best course surface to club members and loves to hear the positive feedback from players.

After the initial project of getting the Latitude 36 back to health, Adams says that the day-to-day maintenance is actually much less than that of other varieties. Basic agronomic practices like correct feeding and grooming have been the magic formula that keeps the grass healthy

and thriving. It all comes down to the proper nutrition and consistent care.

Latitude 36 has become a success story in more ways than one at the North Palm Beach Country Club course, but there are still some skeptics. Adams invites anyone who doubts the choice of Latitude 36 for a South Florida application to talk to him; he is an open book when it comes to the care and maintenance practices that he has found to be successful.

Cory Adams is a superintendent that not only manages with excellence, he is also willing to step out of the box when it comes to management style and is more than willing to share information and interact meaningfully with his peers. These characteristics have allowed Adams to defy the status quo and make the North Palm Beach Country Club golf course a notable success.

Congratulations to Cory and his staff, the winners of the 2020 Latitude 36 Florida Course of the Year award. 🌱

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Big trees in small soil spaces are a recipe for disaster. Photo credit: H. Mayer.

Tree Maintenance

Why it is so important to the landscape



By **Henry Mayer**, UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County,
Urban Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent

Have you ever imagined what the world would be like without trees? The benefits of trees extend beyond their beauty. Trees planted today will offer social, environmental and economic benefits for years to come. There is a popular Chinese proverb that says, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.”

With effective planning and management, urban trees and forests will provide a wide range of important benefits. These include a more pleasant, healthful and comfortable environment to live, work and play in, savings in the costs of providing a wide range of urban services and substantial improvements in individual and community well-being.

Trees provide numerous benefits, but in order to maximize them, a **routine maintenance plan** is required, and of course, an adequate budget. It is recommended

that at least **1% of the average budget of the city go to tree canopy investment** (for cities with a population of 100,000 or more). Although these benefits begin the moment a tree is planted, they are minimal compared to the benefits of a mature tree. The costs associated with removing a large tree and planting a young tree can outweigh the costs of regular tree maintenance practices such as a tree inspection, pruning and mulching.

Urban forestry plans must start with an understanding of the contribution that trees and forests can make to people’s needs. Planning and management efforts should focus on how the forest can best meet those needs. Past planning and management experiences have not been as effective as they could have been because planners and managers have underestimated the potential benefits that urban trees and forests can provide. As a result, normally the tree maintenance budget lacks adequate financing.



Tree grates are detrimental and too expensive.
Photo credit: H. Mayer.



Big trees in small soil spaces are a recipe for disaster. Photo credit: H. Mayer.

The long life of urban trees and forests requires planning with a view to future needs. It must be understood that investments in tree planting and care represent a **long-term commitment** and that improper planting and maintenance increase costs and reduce benefits. Therefore, it is important to get it right at the beginning and plan for future management.

In addition, because urban forests are dynamic systems, their management must also be able to respond to rapid changes in the health and use of resources over time. To assess the effectiveness of management activities, managers can review the results of their efforts by (1) monitoring the effects of program activities, (2) identifying areas for improvement and (3) modifying management plans to address problems.



Improper planning and design. Photo credit: H. Mayer.



Bad pruning practice. Photo credit: H. Mayer.

So let us plan, design and maintain the urban tree canopy accordingly and enjoy now and for future generations with our kids in mind. 🌱

Literature

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Trees need a lot of water. Photo credit: H. Mayer.

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2021 FTGA MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF

Florida Turfgrass Association (FTGA) membership is based on a calendar year. Renewal for 2021 membership opened November 1. To be included in the annual *FTGA Membership Directory & Industry Guide*, membership applications and renewals must be received by March 15, 2021.

The FTGA relies on the revenues derived from membership to continue its work. As the 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. The FTGA benefits everyone involved in the turfgrass industry. In turn, it is appropriate for turfgrass industry professionals to support the FTGA as members so we can continue important work on members' behalf.

Member Benefits

FTGA members receive member pricing on all FTGA programs (up to a 50% savings over non-members). This includes discounted rates on registration fees, trade show booths at the FTGA's flagship, 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 winter. The Turf Seminar program is available at multiple sites around the state. The seminars include up-to-date research; education; new products; and FDACS, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Professional Development

Initiative points, Certified Crop Adviser credits; and a catered lunch.

FTGA members receive a free online and/or 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. In addition, members receive the annually updated *FTGA Membership Directory & Industry Guide*, which is a great way to locate industry contacts.

The association also distributes periodic and timely e-newsletter industry alerts, which are delivered monthly as well as when breaking news makes it necessary.

The FTGA contracts with The Southern Group to lobby on behalf of the association's interest.

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 solely to the individual. Individuals can take advantage of FTGA membership benefits, including member pricing on all FTGA programs and events. The FTGA has six types of individual memberships: The categories are:

Individual.... \$200
Extension/Academic.....\$50
Not for Profit, Municipal.....\$50
Technician.....\$75
Students....\$35
Retirees....\$35

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% savings over non-members). Group memberships

provide for recognition of the organization in addition to recognition for those employees that the organization chooses.

The FTGA has four different group membership plans, renewable each calendar year. They include:

- **Not-For-Profit, Association & Municipal** group memberships at \$200 per year, which provide 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*.

Please support the association that supports you and the turfgrass industry and spread the word to colleagues you believe would benefit from membership.

Thank you. 🌱

JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE!

Online registration IS OPEN.

Go to www.ftga.org and select **Membership** from the top menu. Then select the appropriate membership. If you have any trouble with the online forms, contact Heather Russo at heather@FTGA.org.



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Member Profile

Three generations of growers.



MEMBER PROFILE Travis Council



Most people believe you should love your work, but many never achieve it. FTGA member Travis Council is one of the fortunate ones because he describes his work as his hobby. Travis says, “I manage our family sod farm, Council Growers Inc. I would describe my job title as ‘firefighter’ because I put out fires all day. As a small business owner, I wear a lot of hats but would not have it any other way. I fill in where needed but have a great team around me. Corporate culture is not for me, and I love working for myself.”

Travis grew up in the sod business, just like his father and grandfather. They told him, “Growing a plant is the easy part; selling a plant is the tough part.” Taking the advice to heart, Travis pursued a marketing degree with minors in citrus and what was then called environmental horticulture at Florida Southern College, where he graduated in 1991.

EDUCATION NEVER ENDS

One of Travis’ professors, Tom Mack, told his students, “Once you complete my program, you’ve got a certificate that says, ‘Betta Grabba Hoe.’” The professor printed it on certificates with his signature and gave them to the class. One of Travis’ fraternity brothers gave him a shovel as a graduation present. Travis returned the favor by giving him a tape measure. Both were tools of the trade they would soon need.

Reflecting on his college days, Travis says, “I’ve always appreciated my education for the contacts I made. Learning where to go to learn more about something—this was my best reward from a college education. The best education I received was in the field working with both of my parents. I still learn just as much today as I did the first day I went to work on the farm—from great employees, peers and leaders in the sod business.”

Though his parents were instrumental in his career choice, they did not push him into family business. They told him, “There are easier ways to make a living.”

Travis says, “I have a son and daughter in college today. I gave them both the same advice, but to have a daughter studying agribusiness at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and a son who says he wants to work for himself shows that ag and entrepreneurship are in their genes.”

One of the most gratifying parts of Travis’ job is watching a field or a project go from an idea in his head to a functioning,

producing creation. He says, “I own the successes, and I own the failures. Growing up in a family business, I learned valuable lessons working with the best mentor of all, my father, Pat Council.”

EVOLUTION OF A TURF ENTREPRENEUR

“I feel like I continue to grow every day. I believe there is so much to learn about turf and about business that if you don’t evolve and grow, you perish. I have gone from getting my hands in the dirt, everyday farming, to spending a ton of time dealing with regulators, HR issues, marketers and occasionally growing grass.

“Technology has had a huge effect on our farm. I remember the first time I stacked sod was with my sister. We hand-stacked bahiagrass sod behind a Ryan sod cutter on our family farm. I’m pretty sure our pallets did not make it on the truck that day. I learned to appreciate the guys who could do this day in and day out with ease. Fast forward to today when we use a Firefly automated harvester with no human hand touching the grass as it is stacked.

“When I was in school, I took one class on using a computer. This was in the late ’80s, so I think we learned about DOS (Microsoft’s early, text-based operating system). I spend more time using the computer to grow a crop than I ever dreamed I would. It’s not that we’re a big operation; it’s that we simply can’t hire the workforce to do the jobs.

“Our family has grown citrus for generations, and I grew citrus alongside turf and truly enjoyed growing it. We made the decision back in 2017 to get out of the citrus business, as citrus greening had made it impossible to make a living. This was a tough decision as I really enjoyed the citrus business. Our operation had to evolve into other crops to survive,” says Travis.

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

“I have had many failures along the way. I really look at them as great learning opportunities. Our family has always raised cattle, and in one of my first ‘enterprises,’ I took empty Croker feed sacks, went into the pasture and collected dried cow manure to fill the sacks to sell to our neighbors for their gardens. Before that, my sister and I had the bright idea to pick all the fruit off my folks’ dooryard orange and grapefruit trees (without



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permission) and sell it to the neighbors from our neighborhood stand. We got in a bit of trouble for that one.

“When I went away to college in Lakeland, I sold turf plug trays delivered or installed and bought them from my folks. I had not quite figured out how to balance my finances because I bounced a check for turf plugs I bought from them. Very humbling! As a young man, I repaired irrigation, sold gift fruit from a roadside stand on the wrong side of town, sprayed yards, anything and everything, all while keeping a ‘day job’ at our family farm—with an understanding boss, my father. While spraying yards, I helped a client by killing some ‘weeds’ along a walkway. I took out their herb garden. Luckily, they were family friends, and I learned to stick to the grass. My wife and family have been right there the whole time helping me with whatever endeavor I took on while I learned with every step and misstep I took.

“A few years ago, we were looking to expand our farm acreage, and I heard that a friendly competitor from Sarasota, Bayside Sod, was looking to move north and expand. Rather than grow independently and compete, we chose to partner on a new farm and work together. Today, that partnership thrives as a new endeavor and I am thankful for our great partners, Tiffany Bailey, Paul Bispham and Jack Bispham.

“Some of my best times have been spent behind the wheel of a tractor. ‘Tractor time,’ as my wife called it, gave me great opportunities to solve the world’s problems. I would come home from work with a million ideas to flesh out, and it helped me focus and find solutions. I rarely get tractor time these days, but I always enjoy getting some time away to think,” he says.

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Travis says, “Labor and regulation are the biggest challenges I face in the sod business. No matter how large or small your organization, you must get involved in associations such as the FTGA to look for the solutions to these problems and to help shape outcomes for the future. I have tried to be a good steward of the land and constantly adapt, and I am willing to change to find solutions. I have been active in as many fronts as I could and learned more from working with so many great minds in our industry than I could have ever contributed.

“We have contributed by constantly looking at new turf and groundcover species and by working with the University of Florida, the Turf Producers of Florida, and private organizations to find grasses that require fewer inputs and less of each input, better adaption to a given environment and better playability for the future. Today, our farm grows 13 different types of turf and groundcover—growing five different St. Augustine grasses, three bermudagrass varieties, Empire Zoysia, native paspalum, two different perennial peanut groundcovers and Jasmine Minima groundcover. Surprisingly, as a small farm, we have found that giving the customer options keeps our doors open and keeps us on top of solutions for the turf industry.

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

“I have been on the Turf Producers of Florida (TPF) board since 2014, working alongside a great group of directors and

our amazing Executive Director Betsy McGill. We have tackled a plethora of issues and continually worked with the FTGA as a great partner. We have partnered with The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) to bring new innovative grasses to growers in Florida, helped to get growers solutions in dealing with lethal viral necrosis, championed for research dollars and research personnel to come to IFAS, worked with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service (FDACS) on Best Management Practices to help the environment but that are not overly burdensome on turf growers and worked with turf industry vendors to get them in front of growers who can benefit from their products. We have networked with growers and educated them on how to operate in a COVID environment. This has been such a challenging and rewarding time in my life,” he says.

Travis has also been active in supporting sound science relating to water quality and conservation through TPF, South Florida Water Management District, FDACS and UF/IFAS on the local and county level. He says, “We have supported the Environmental Research & Education Foundation and the great work Mac Carraway is doing there. I am puzzled at the blind eye given to science. I would recommend anyone remotely associated with the turf industry to find a way to advocate on these fronts as they have such a major impact on our industry and our livelihoods.

“I’ve been an FTGA member since the late 1990s, and it has been a great place to network, get educated on a given issue and advocate for all things turf.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Travis was raised in Ruskin, Florida, just south of Tampa. He says, “Our kids were involved in Scouts, Future Farmers of America and cross-country athletics while growing up. I was fortunate to be ‘outdoors’ as I got involved with their passions. There is a balance between work and play, and I am trying to find it as my kids go off to school and my wife and I join the ‘empty nesters’ stage of life. We are a small farm, and it is difficult for me to make time for anything other than work, but it is well worth it.

“My wife has been beside me every step of the way. Back in the ‘90s, we had to babysit a newly planted sod field with a troublesome, hard-hose irrigation system that kept breaking down. That system used one large sprinkler on a hose that was pulled slowly to cover an area. We had to spend the night in the field to keep the machine running. One night, we parked the truck in the perfect spot and fell asleep with the windows down. The sprinkler soaked the inside of truck and woke us up. My wife will never let me live that down. She is a great partner in life and continues to work with me every day in the turf business.

“Having grown up in the business, I have done every job on the farm. This has given me a broad perspective. Regardless of your position in any sector of the industry, watch and learn from your coworkers in all facets of the business. Get involved in the industry. It will pay dividends you cannot imagine. You will learn from your peers; they will learn from you. This is how our industry will continue to prosper—because of the dedication of people like you,” says Travis. 🌱

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FOCUS ON Tax Season



PHOTO CREDIT: Nattanan Kanchanaprat from Pixabay

Consider These Year-End Financial Moves

We're nearing the end of 2020—and for many of us, it will be a relief to turn the calendar page on this challenging year. However, we've still got a few weeks left, which means you have time to make some year-end financial moves that may work in your favor. Below are a few suggestions.

ADD TO YOUR IRA

For the 2020 tax year, you can add \$6,000 to your traditional or Roth IRA—\$7,000 if you're 50 or older. If you haven't reached this limit, consider adding some money. You actually have until April 15, 2021, to contribute to your IRA for 2020, but the sooner you put the money in, the quicker it can go to work for you. Plus, if you have to pay taxes in April, you'll be less likely to contribute to your IRA then.

MAKE AN EXTRA 401(K) PAYMENT

If it's allowed by your employer, put a little extra in your 401(k) or similar retirement plan. And if your salary goes up next year, increase your regular contributions.

SEE YOUR TAX ADVISOR

It's possible that you could improve your tax situation by making some investment-related moves. For example, if you sold some investments whose value has increased, you could incur capital gains taxes. To offset these gains, you could sell other investments that have lost value, assuming these investments are no longer essential to your financial strategy. Your tax advisor can evaluate this type of move, along with others, to determine those that may be appropriate for your situation.

REVIEW YOUR INVESTMENT MIX

As you consider your portfolio, think about the events of these past 12 months and how you responded to them. When

COVID-19 hit early in the year, and the financial markets plunged, did you find yourself worrying constantly about the losses you were taking, even though they were just "on paper" at that point? Did you even sell investments to "cut your losses" without waiting for a market recovery? If so, you might want to consult with a financial professional to determine if your investment mix is still appropriate for your goals and risk tolerance or if you need to make some changes.

EVALUATE YOUR NEED FOR RETIREMENT PLAN WITHDRAWALS

If you are 72 or older, you must start taking withdrawals—technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs—from your traditional IRA and your 401(k) or similar retirement plan. Typically, you must take these RMDs by December 31 every year. However, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act suspended or waived all RMDs due in 2020. If you're in this age group, but you don't need the money, you can let your retirement accounts continue growing on a tax-deferred basis.

THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

Are you saving enough for your children's college education? Are you still on track toward the retirement lifestyle you've envisioned? Or, have your retirement plans changed as a result of the pandemic? All of these issues can affect your investment strategies, so you'll want to think carefully about what decisions you may need to make.

Looking back—and ahead—can help you make the moves to end 2020 on a positive note and start 2021 on the right foot.

This article was written by Edward Jones and contributed by FTGA member and Edward Jones Financial Advisor Erik Jorgensen. If he can be of service, you can reach him by phone at 561-741-1173 or 561-310-5563 or by email at erik.jorgensen@edwardjones.com.



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Fall Political UPDATE

By **Seth McKeel & David Shepp**, *The Southern Group*



Greetings from your team at The Southern Group. We hope that everyone has remained healthy and that your businesses continue to thrive. During the fall, kids went back to school (traditional or virtual), days became a little bit cooler, Florida moved to Phase 3 in business re-openings, and Election Day has come and gone, with final results

yet to be determined.

As you know, on Friday, September 25, Gov. Ron DeSantis moved the State of Florida into Phase 3 of his Re-Opening Plan. With that action, limits on businesses, such as restaurants and bars, were removed as well as any local fines or fees for individuals failing to wear masks. Businesses may not be prohibited from operating by local ordinance, and business owners also retain the ability to self-regulate the way they operate (such as requiring masks indoors, limiting indoor capacity, maintaining social distancing standards, etc.). Golf course superintendents can determine what standards work best for their courses and patrons when it comes to distancing (single cart or two to a cart) and contact with materials (rakes, flagsticks, etc.). In a nutshell, the governor is trying to move Florida into the position of being as back to normal as possible, given the circumstances.

On Florida's political front, the tumultuous state and local election cycle has ended. While the contentious post-presidential race remains ever-present on the airwaves, most local and state officials and candidates in Florida had a very "non-election year" experience throughout the summer due to COVID. Following the primary election at the end of August, that changed significantly as candidates and incumbents ventured out in public more and more to attend modified campaign events, walk door-to-door and raise the campaign funds necessary to get their messages out to the voters.

Legislative Outlook

On the legislative front, no matter what happens at the top of the ticket with the presidential race, the Republican Party maintains control of both the Florida House and Senate. The Senate President will remain Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby) and the House Speaker will remain Representative Chris Sprowls (R-Clearwater). Sen. Simpson has been a major champion for agricultural and common-sense environmental issues during his time in the Senate and has also played a large role in the FTGA's priority legislation this past year. Agriculture and the environment are in his DNA, so we anticipate he will continue to place a high priority on both during his leadership.

Following the November election, the House and Senate convened for an Organizational Session on November 17 to swear in the new members and formalize the leadership structure. Once the members were officially sworn in, they receive their committee assignments and training. Committee meetings will begin after the new year, with two weeks in January and three weeks in February. The 2021 Session will begin on Tuesday, March 2.

Without a doubt, the primary focus of the 2021 Session will be Florida's response to the COVID pandemic. Florida's budget has taken a beating for the past six months, with the Legislature's Office of Economic & Demographic Research predicting a budget shortfall that will stretch over the next three years. The current fiscal year is expected to come in \$2.7 billion below the \$92.2 billion budget that was passed in March. Legislators will have to determine the best mix of CARES/federal funding, Budget Stabilization funds, and (potentially) other funds to ensure a balanced budget without dramatic cuts to programs. Legislation will focus on addressing issues that arose during the pandemic as well as setting Florida up to be better prepared for future challenges.

One thing is certain—the 2021 session will be a unique challenge for all.

We continue to wish the very best for all of you, your families, employees and customers. It is our privilege to work with you. Stay safe and healthy. 🌱

Marketplace

Ideas, People, Events, Products, Promotions, Sound Bytes, Etc.

PEOPLE



Unsung Heroes: Spotlight on Ethel Scott, UF/IFAS Extension, South Florida

Editor's Note: It is often the behind-the-scenes support individuals who make or break the effectiveness of an organization. In this issue, we take great pleasure in introducing you to just such an Unsung Hero in the Palm Beach County Extension.

By Bill Schall, Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent IV, Palm Beach County, Cooperative Extension

Ethel Scott has been the secretary for the Palm Beach County Extension Commercial Horticulture and Commercial Vegetable Programs since 2012. To many in this both large urban and agricultural county, she is an indispensable and warm link to services and to the extension agents she supports. Ethel is responsible for many of the typical things secretaries handle. This might include telephone operator for the office, registering those enrolling in extension webinars and workshops, deciding just which agent or Master Gardener should get the amazing variety and volume of questions that come in each day, posting webinars and workshops online, and compiling workshop data for extension agents. She is probably better known by the public and extension clientele as the friendly, helpful and gracious voice on the other end of the telephone.

Questions might range from "what is your pesticide applicator license number again so I can enter your CEUs into the database," or "sure, we can take care of that for you" to "OK, you are registered... see you Tuesday." The employees and Master Gardener volunteers at Palm Beach County Extension also appreciate that Ethel is never too busy to hear what is on their mind, and she has plenty of related experiences to share with them. She makes employees and volunteers feel appreciated by never forgetting birthdays and by always having the most entertainingly decorated office for every holiday. She practices what we teach by having her own collection of well-maintained plants greening and beautifying her office.

Ethel is the welcoming glue at the Palm Beach Extension office that always makes sure visitors and employees feel better about their day. She is deserving to be recognized as an "Unsung Hero." So, next time you call that office, remember that it is "Miss Scott" who is enjoying speaking with you as much as you are with her.



Greg Pheneger Wins GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador Leadership Award

Congratulations to Greg Pheneger, past FTGA president, for winning the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America Grassroots Ambassador Leadership Award (GCSAA). The award is presented in partnership

with Toro to recognize those who have demonstrated growth in advocacy and advancement of the GCSAA Priority Issues Agenda through congressional outreach and relationship development with a member of Congress. Greg has also been active locally in cooperation with the Environmental Research & Education Foundation.



Congratulations, Dr. J. Bryan Unruh

Dr. J. Bryan Unruh has been bestowed the honor of fellow by two societies, the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Society of America. Fellow is the highest recognition given by both societies. Congratulations, Dr. Unruh, you are a staunch advocate on behalf of the industry.

EDUCATION

Two upcoming free webinars of interest to landscape professionals are offered by the University of Florida Extension:

Planting & Establishment of Trees will be held December 18, 2020, 10:00 a.m.–noon. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/32YIWSz>.

Lawncare Solutions will be held January 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m.–noon. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/2Upk6q1>.

LEGISLATION TO WATCH

The Protect America's Children From Toxic Pesticides Act of 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3noWNCc>) was introduced in August by Sen. Tom Udall (D-MN). The bill, if passed, would introduce sweeping changes for regulating the sale and use of pesticides. It has been referred to the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. The good news is that there's not enough time to deal with this in the current session, but it will likely be reintroduced sometime in the next session. Read more about it at <https://bit.ly/3nlJKsb>.

STEALS & DEALS



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Halloween Pennant Dragonfly

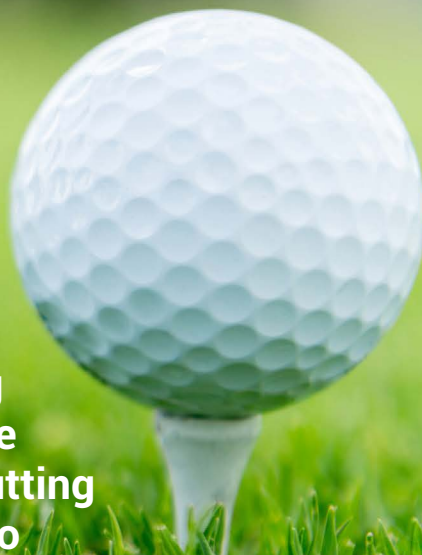
The Halloween pennant gets its name from its orange colored wings, which have dark brown bands marking them. It can often be seen perched on tips of vegetation near the edges of waterways making it look like a flag or pennant.

Photo and content courtesy of
W. Craig Weyandt.



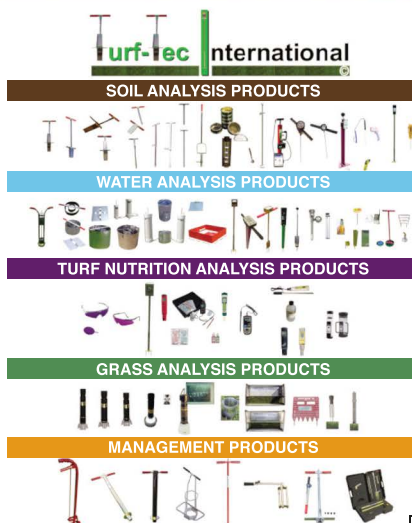
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