

UF's turf program: Slowly but surely...

Using my column in a quarterly magazine to make reports of my activities on behalf of the FGCSA and FTGA is like choosing the Pony Express over e-mail. Nevertheless it chronicles our progress and ensures that every Florida superintendent is aware of what's happening, even if the information is old news by the time it is read in *The Florida Green*.

A couple of significant developments have occurred in our quest to persuade the University of Florida to enhance support of their turfgrass program.

An outside review of the program, suggested by Jan Beljan at our big meeting with UF officials last April, was completed on February 21. I'm confident the final report will have been completed and distributed by the time this magazine is in your hands and that the report will make recommendations which IFAS will utilize to expand and improve the turf program.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to the Review Team. These gentlemen took a week of their time to come to Florida and thoroughly examine the University of Florida's Turfgrass Program.

Hats off to Dr. Bruce Clark of Rutgers, Dr. Karl Danneberger of Ohio State, Dr. James Fiescher of Clemson, Dr. Keith Karnok of Georgia, Dr. Michael Kenna of the USGA, Gordon LaFontaine of the Michigan Turfgrass Association, Gene

Maples of the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina, and our own Ralph White representing the FTGA. They worked their tails off and left no stone unturned in their quest for the facts.

Thanks are also due Jeff Ball, David Barnes, Roy Bates, Jeff Hayden, and Dale Kuehner for their participation and contributions.

The other development regarding the UF Turf Program is actually a disappointment. Our efforts to hire a Turfgrass Coordinator have suffered a setback. Seventeen candidates applied for the position. The field was narrowed to five, then to two, and when one of those accepted another job we were left with one applicant.

The candidate was not offered the job, not for any glaring deficiencies, but because of the extremely high personal as well as professional qualifications we have placed on this position offering.

Honestly, I'm not that disappointed in this turn of events. I think it makes more sense to wait until the review is finalized before a coordinator is hired to lead the program. I also think we can fine tune the job description and position announcement to attract an illustrious candidate. The most disappointing thing is that it will probably take another six months or more before a coordinator can be hired due to the required protocol.

Compared to industry, the wheels at the university – any university – turn very slowly, but the potential benefits are worth the wait.

Mark My Words



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