

A Job Well Done

President's Message



Greg Plotner, CGCS
President
FGCSA

It will be interesting to see if the GCSAA International Conference and Show can possibly get any better than this year's spectacular event in Orlando. From the educational sessions to the trade show to the many fine receptions, this year's show will not be forgotten anytime soon.

And how about Florida and its many fine superintendents being recognized for outstanding achievements at almost every affair during the conference and show? From our winning golf team (Florida #1) of Kevin Downing, Mark Hopkins, Buck Buckner and Jim Osborne to our National Environmental Steward Award Winner, Darren Davis, to Joel Jackson, our Editor-in-Chief of the top award-winning magazine, *The Florida Green*, Florida was a shining star among its peers.

The FGCSA, with the assistance of our industry's many valuable affiliates, also took top honors for its "gala" reception held on Friday night. Paul Crawford, you really outdid yourself on this one. How can you ever top it? Thanks goes to you from the FGCSA and the reception's sponsors for all of your hard work and a job well done!

Congratulations also go out to Gary Grigg, CGCS, now past president of the GCSAA, for his commitment and dedication to our profession through the years. Gary's presidential term of this past year will undoubtedly not be

forgotten, for he worked hard with his staff to help transform the GCSAA into a much more member-friendly organization.

The room on Friday night, in which the President's Reception was held in Gary's honor, was filled with many people who have had the opportunity to work with this great man, myself being one of them. For you see, my coming to Florida 10 years ago to be the golf course superintendent at Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club was because of Gary's recommendation. Many thanks to you, Gary, not only from me, but from everyone in the FGCSA.

Also, there were many other superintendents who are members of the FGCSA who received awards or were honored in Orlando that I have not mentioned. To all of you, congratulations on a job well done. All of our members should be proud of the accomplishments that were achieved by these FGCSA superintendents.

On another note, as expected, all bylaw changes for the GCSAA were approved as written. These changes carry some impacts with them that will affect the FGCSA and all of the local chapters. The Executive Board of the FGCSA is working on these bylaw changes and also on the affiliation agreements at this time. Hopefully all of the chapters will be able to review these changes and agreements before the Poa meeting in May. If anyone has any comments or concerns, please feel free to give me a call.

At this year's annual meeting, we supported all the proposed bylaw changes. These all passed with overwhelming support from the GCSAA membership. This was a

difficult year for choosing which candidates to support. The people running for national office were exceptionally well qualified. We supported the following candidates: George Renault III, CGCS for Secretary/Treasurer; Ken Mangum, CGCS and R. Scott Woodhead, CGCS for Director. All three candidates were elected and Michael Wallace, CGCS was appointed to the Board.

I have been asked many times how the delegate process works. When someone originally joins the GCSAA, they fill out a form stating how they wish to vote. You can vote as an individual, by proxy, or chapter delegate. If you choose to vote as an individual, you must attend the GCSAA annual meeting at the Annual Conference & Show to cast your vote. If you choose to vote by chapter delegate, your vote is cast by the certified Voting Delegate representing the chapter you assigned your vote to. This remains the case until you change your voting status. We encourage all new members to assign their votes to the FGCSA and not their local chapter if they want to vote by delegate. This allows the FGCSA Voting delegate to cast one large ballot as opposed to casting ten smaller ones for each chapter.

One of the major reasons for the formation of the State Association (State Chapter) was to give the superintendents a strong voice in GCSAA matters. Because of our 12-month season, it is difficult for a Florida Superintendent to run for the GCSAA Board of Directors. By uniting our voting power, we can champion issues and candidates we feel will be in the best interest of all GCSAA members including Florida. The following is a brief synopsis of how the voting delegate process works.

At the FGCSA Summer Board Meeting or

soon after, the FGCSA Board of Directors approves the selection of the Voting Delegate and Alternate Voting Delegate, who will represent the state. This is usually a presidential appointment and is someone who has an interest in the process.

Every September, the GCSAA holds the annual Chapter Relations meeting at headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas. In the past, each chapter could send a representative, usually the External Vice President. In the future it will be only the Affiliated Chapters that will be able to send a representative. This meeting is the first opportunity for chapter delegates to see and meet the candidates nominated for the GCSAA Board and discuss possible bylaw proposals. After returning from Kansas, the local chapter delegates meet with their respective chapter members and boards to discuss any issues raised and to review the slate of candidates.

At the next FGCSA board meeting after

It's Your Vote

Kuehner's Corner



Dale Kuehner, CGCS
Vice President

Articles of Incorporation and By Law Changes

	Yes	No
Ballot Issue #1 - Modification of articles of incorporation allowing chapter delegates and proxy voting for modification in annual dues for Class AA, A, B and C members	6632	9
Ballot Issue #2 - Beginning July 1, 1997, that each new Class A and B member residing in the U.S., except Alaska, must also be a member of an affiliated chapter.	6093	548
Ballot Issue #3 - Removing voting rights from Class C members and adding section to the bylaws delineating the rights of membership.	5437	1204
Ballot Issue #4 - That all chapters must have an Affiliation Agreement with GCSAA and establishing disciplinary action for violation of the agreement and Code of Ethics	6156	485
Ballot Issue #5 - Allowing the Stadnards/Bylaws Committee to reject proposed amendments and providing a means for an individual to submit a proposed amendment to membership vote.	6423	218
Ballot Issue #6 - Allowing chapter delegates and proxy holders to vote on modifications of annual dues, allowing the Board of Directors to remove or discipline a board member, allowing for the board to hold special meetings by phone, allowing a Director to waive the right to meeting notice, indemnifying Directors for simple negligence in accordance with state laws and providing for the dissolution of the Association and distribution of the assets in accordance with state and federal laws.	6609	12
A ballot for reduction of Class C dues to \$105, one-half of class A and B dues was also approved.	5571	279

Kansas, the various external vice presidents report each chapters's position on the issues and the candidates. If there is no clear choice or preference of whom to vote for, a caucus is planned for the national conference after further conversations and meetings with the candidates. This past year we were fortunate to have GCSAA President Gary Grigg attend all FGCSA board meetings to keep us informed of the latest details and concerns relating to Chapter Affiliation.

Each candidate for office is invited to the FGCSA reception held during Conference & Show week prior to the Annual Meeting. This gives the voting delegate and any other interested members the opportunity to discuss any important issues with the candidates. After meeting with the candidates, the final caucus is held to decide how the Voting Delegate will cast the FGCSA votes. If any individual member or chapter disagrees with the FGCSA voting preferences, they can instruct the voting delegate to cast their vote(s) differently from the rest of the state. After all, it is your vote!

Vote Count for Officers and Directors

President	✓	Bruce Williams, CGCS	By Acclamation
Vice President	✓	Paul McGinnis, CGCS	By Acclamation
Secretary/ Treasurer		Dave Fearis, CGCS	2201
	✓	George Renault, CGCS	3742
		Paul Dermott, CGCS	711
	✓	Ken Mangum, CGCS	3507
Directors		Sam Snyder, CGCS	1502
		Robert Tillema, CGCS	825
	✓	Michael Wallace, CGCS	2310
	✓	Scott Woodhead, CGCS	3037

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Don't Play With People's Lives

Guest Editorial



Monica Elliott, PhD
Plant Pathologist
UF-IFAS

I have desperately tried to understand the golfer and golf course owner point of view in regards to golf course maintenance. However, to

borrow from Hollywood, I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore. Now, you're probably thinking the person writing this is a golf course superintendent. No, I am an associate professor of turfgrass pathology with the University of Florida at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center. I work very closely with the golf course superintendents trying to make sure golfers have the best possible conditions for playing

golf. What happens to them affects me also, personally and professionally.

So what has me all fired up? I can no longer tolerate the way superintendents are treated when the weather takes a turn for the worse. Superintendents all over southern Florida have either lost their jobs or are afraid they will in the next few weeks. Why? Because we have had abnormally high rainfall. Naples has had over 42 inches since August 1. Many communities in Palm Beach County are flooded today, thanks to 12 inches of rainfall in 24 hours. Superintendents in Illinois and Indiana have been under the same pressure. Why? Too much rain in the spring followed by a drought and excessive heat during the summer. And then the golfer or owner has the nerve to ask why the greens don't look perfect. How would you feel if someone kept beating you up all the time?

Growing plants is a risky business. Ask any farmer! Farmers in Illinois are harvesting poor crops of corn and soybeans this year due to the bad weather. My father has farmed in that area all his life. Even with all his experience, he could not change the crop yield because he could not alter the weather. He doesn't like it, but he accepts it. The citrus crop in Florida failed a number of years in the 1980s because of severe freezes. Again, the farmers live with that because they could not change the weather. Why do golfers and owners think that superintendents

can change the weather? Superintendents are great managers, but even *they* can't control Mother Nature. Why can't golfers understand this? The only explanation I have is they must all have green thumbs with beautiful gardens that are perfect. Right — and I still believe in the Tooth Fairy!

Golf course superintendents are professionals who know what to do if the golfer will allow them to use their knowledge and skills. Golfers complain if the greens are slow because the superintendent has raised the height of cut. The height of cut is increased because that is the very first thing that professionals like myself recommend. We have the proof to demonstrate that this is the most effective method for preventing serious long-term damage to the green. There is no such thing as perfect greens 365 days a year. It simply cannot be done, no matter how much money you have. You can't change the physiology of the plant.

Let me use southern Florida as an example. Southern Florida is in a subtropical climate. This means we have extensive rainfall in the summer and fall (corresponding with the hurricane season). During the rainy season, we not only have extensive periods of rainfall but also many days without adequate sunshine for bermudagrass growth. Bermudagrass is not a shade-loving plant. In fact, under low light intensity, bermudagrass actually changes the way it grows in that it puts most of its energy into its leaves and stolons and little into its root system. Plants don't survive very well without an extensive root system. So as the summer and fall progress, the root system becomes more and more shallow. The only thing keeping the plant alive are the green leaves. If those leaves are continually cut too short, then you further reduce the plant's ability to survive.

What is the appropriate height for bermudagrass? Let me answer this question from a historical perspective. The bermudagrass cultivars used today on putting greens are Tifgreen and Tifdwarf. They were developed 30 years ago. At the time they were selected, 1/4 inch was considered a very low height of cut. We have proven year after year here at the research center that Tifgreen cannot be

maintained during summer and early fall at less than 1/4 inch, and we don't even have the everyday stress of golfers! Tifdwarf is tolerant of a 3/16-inch cut. However, if it is cut much below this height for any length of time in bad weather, it will look as bad as Tifgreen. Golf courses still use Tifdwarf because no other grass selection has proven to be any better.

Furthermore, golfers and owners have no basis for judgment of a good or bad superintendent if they keep changing the superintendent every couple of years. As with any professional pursuit, you learn from experience. I have never seen two golf courses react the same. For that matter, I have never seen two greens on a golf course react to weather and stresses exactly the same. It will take a minimum of a year for a new

superintendent to become familiar with a golf course as he needs to see how it responds to various weather patterns and maintenance practices. It is obvious to me that changing superintendents does not solve a golf course's problems. Each new superintendent at a course eventually calls me with the same problem that the prior superintendent had. There are a number of courses in southern Florida that I know better than the membership or owner. I am not complaining. I am happy to help, but it is a waste of resources (i.e., taxpayers' money) for me to go to the same course each year to view the same problem because the membership or owner will not allow the superintendent to implement my suggestions or the suggestions of other professionals.

Superintendents should be applauded for their management. Instead they are dismissed. How do they explain their dismissal to their children? How would you, the golfer, explain this to his or her family? "Well, kids, I like fast greens and your father or mother couldn't keep them fast enough for me when we had rain every day. Now, don't blame it on me. Blame Mother Nature." Get real, folks! Growing grass that is constantly under stress is an achievement that should be applauded. If I had my choice, a golfer would not be allowed to play until he or she spent a month in the superintendent's shoes listening to complaints from fellow golfers.

Editor's Note: Dr. Elliott originally sent this unsolicited letter to Golf Digest.



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