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# FTGA Conference and Show Draws Nearly 1200 to New UF Hotel & Conference Center

## Santella Becomes First Woman to Lead State's Umbrella Turf Group

**T**he Florida Turfgrass Association held its 2000 Conference and Show in Gainesville Aug. 14-16 for the second year in a row. The new University of Florida Hotel and Conference Center located near campus served as conference headquarters and is an excellent venue for future meetings and educational sessions. The friendly staff and comfortable surroundings made an excellent place for conference attendees to meet and network.

Meanwhile, the Florida Gymnasium Building across the street from the O'Connell Center had excellent facilities for 650 people attending workshops and concurrent sessions over the three-day event. Over 300 attended the traditional conference-opening Toro Corn Boil Aug. 14 at the Touchdown Terrace at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

At the FTGA business meeting and awards luncheon on Aug. 15. Over 120 people witnessed the history-making swearing-in of the FTGA's first woman president, Erica Santella. Santella is a regional manager with TruGreen-ChemLawn and has been very involved in government affairs issues since coming onto the FTGA board. The other officers elected for the year are Vice President Alan Puckett, golf course superintendent at the Eaglebrooke G. C. in Lakeland and Secretary/Treasurer Ray Carruthers, consultant for Emerald Island/South Florida Turf Companies.

Newly elected or reelected directors were Tom Alex, Jan Beljan, David Robinson, Barry Troutman and Tom Wells.

During the awards ceremonies, scholarships and fellowships were handed out to eight turf students enrolled either at Lake City Community College or at the University of Florida. Following those



*New FTGA officers from the left: Secretary/Treasurer Ray Caruthers, Emerald Island/South Florida Turf Companies; President Erica Santella, TruGreen-ChemLawn; and Vice President Alan Puckett, Eaglebrooke CC. Photo by Steve Pearson.*



*A couple of FTGA past presidents share the podium as Gerry Millholen (96) presents Michael J. McLaughlin (90) with the 2000 FTGA Wreath of Grass award for his service to the association. Photo by Steve Pearson.*

**30 superintendents  
attended a GCSAA  
Leadership Series  
seminar on team  
building techniques  
presented by Gerry  
Sweda, a long time  
GCSAA faculty member  
and a former  
superintendent.**

presentations, Mike McLaughlin was presented the FTGA's Wreath of Grass Award by his old friend, Gerry Millholen.

Golf course superintendents in attendance took advantage of several educational opportunities designed especially for them. On Tuesday, 30 superintendents attended a GCSAA Leadership Series seminar on Team Building Techniques presented by Gerry Sweda, a long time GCSAA faculty member who is also a former superintendent and now owns his own training and development company. On Wednesday, three speakers made presentations for the Golf Concurrent Session:

- Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association President Mary Hartney spoke on Crisis Management Planning and Communications. Hartney reminded the group that it's better to have a communication plan ahead of time instead of trying to react when a crisis happens and the TV cameras are rolling.

- Gary Grigg, CGCS/MG compared and contrasted the USGA green construction versus the California Sand Green method. Citing the need to adhere to the specific materials specifications, Grigg told attendees the biggest failure with both of these greens is that they often are not built properly and so the research data and management recommendations don't work because of the short cuts made in the construction phase.

## 2000 Florida Plants of the Year - Part 4

**Editors Note:** Last in the 2000 series. The Florida Plants of the Year program was launched in 1998 and has been beneficial to both consumers and growers. Purchasers are introduced to under-utilized but proven Florida plant material. The plants are chosen each year by a committee of horticulturists, nurserymen, educators, landscape architects and other members of the horticulture industry representing Central, North and South Florida.

### COMMON NAME: Yellow Barleria

**BOTANICAL NAME:** Barleria micans  
**HARDINESS:** Zones 10-11  
**MATURE HEIGHT AND SPREAD:** 4-5 feet tall and wide  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Landscape shrub  
**LANDSCAPE USE:** Mass planting or specimen in light shade  
**CHARACTERISTICS:** Terminal spikes of pale yellow blooms



This herbaceous plant forms a dense multi-branched shrub with clear yellow flowers at the top of each shoot. The rounded bush blooms almost year round. The tropical to subtropical shrub grows best with a steady water supply and ample fertilizer. Bed preparation for the landscape requires rich soil with high organic content.

### COMMON NAME: Ficus Midnight

**BOTANICAL NAME:** Ficus benjamina 'Midnight'  
**HARDINESS:** Low to medium light  
**MATURE HEIGHT X SPREAD:** At one year old the plant is 12-14 inches high and 8-10 inches wide  
**CLASSIFICATION:** Ornamental foliage plant  
**INTERIOR/LANDSCAPE USE:** Specimen plant for interiorscape; 6 inch pots of 'Midnight' can be used as ground covers



**CHARACTERISTICS:** This cultivar has very thick extremely dark blue-black leaves. This ficus has proven to be a fast grower with an upright bushy, compact growth habit. The leaves are very thick and the overall appearance of the plant is one of extreme health and vigor. 'Midnight' is capable of growing under lower light and water conditions than ficus of the past.

- Dr. Laurie Trenholm discussed the qualities of the new "wonder grass" sea-shore paspalum. Describing its unique ability to tolerate high saline conditions, Dr. Trenholm reminded everyone that this grass may have great applications in coastal areas, but may not be for everyone.

The FTGA Trade Show this year began on Tuesday evening with the Grand Open-

ing and Open House reception for the attendees. It was a nice relaxing way to grab a bite to eat and wander the trade show floor at the end of a busy day of classes. Reaction seemed very positive to this new format and the complimentary food and refreshments were appreciated by all. Early numbers indicate nearly 1200 attended the conference and show this year.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS



## Harrell's Turf Academy Draws Good Crowd

In its annual show of appreciation to its customers, the Harrell's Fertilizer Company hosted its Seventh Annual Turf Academy at the Westin Innisbrook Resort in Tarpon Springs June 7-8.

Harrell's put on quite a jam-packed day-and-a-half event with golf, education, keynote speakers, a mini-trade show, meals and a hotel room all for a measly \$20 registration fee guarantee. To top that, Harrell's matched the registration fees paid and then rounded it off to make a \$7,000 donation to the FTGA Research Foundation.

Golf was first as 312 attendees teed it up Wednesday in either a scramble tournament on the Island Course or the stroke-play competition on the Copperhead Course. That evening at the awards banquet, keynote speaker, former Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Stephen H. Grimes gave a thought-provoking address, "Is There Any Justice?"

His talk highlighted several cases that came before the court and the thinking that went into the decisions.

The next day was Academy Day and eight speakers from academia and industry discussed:

- Overseeding Turfgrass Varieties for the Southeast: Their Development and Use by Steve Johnson, Iowa State University, Cebeco International Seeds - The constant search for grasses to meet the needs of various geographic regions with emphasis on season durability but easier transitions.

- Nutrient Fate & Utilization: An Environmental Perspective by Dr. Jeff Higgins, Auburn University, Pursell Technologies, Inc. - The nitrate regulations are coming. We need more factual documentation on what's happening to nitrogen in the environment.

- Innovations in Mole Cricket & Grub Control, by Dr. John Paige, III, Texas A&M, Bayer Corporation. - Research seeks the weak link in an insect's life cycle and exploit it with chemical controls. Pesticide users must learn to moni-



*Turf Academy host Jack Harrell, Jr., left, poses along side a David Pursell drawing of Payne Stewart with GCSAA CEO Steve Mona who gave a "State of the GCSAA 2000" keynote address at the event held June 7-8 at the Westin Innisbrook Resort. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

tor those life cycles to take biological and economical advantage of those weak links.

- Is Your Turf Getting Its Daily Requirement of Oxygen? by Larry Lennert, U. of Wisconsin, Profile Products LLC. - Oxygen is the key component of photosynthesis. Make sure your soils have the quantity and quality they need.

- Golf Course Ornamental Disease Control and Fungicide Update by Dr. Deborah Meier, U. of Arkansas, Zeneca Professional Products.

- Adjuvant Selection and the Impact on Pesticide Efficacy by James D. Reiss, Illinois State University, Precision Laboratories, Inc. - No one adjuvant or surfactant does it all. There are various products for different needs. Read the label. Know your target and the goal you need to achieve to make the chemical more effective.

- Fire Ant and Mole Cricket Control: Five-year Performance Data by Dr. Ken Kukorowski U. of Wisconsin-Madison, Aventis Environmental Science (Chipco) - Low-dose insecticides are gaining favor with EPA. Life cycles of insects are not as critical as before. Clean Water Act may

require more precision application with drop spreaders and setbacks from water bodies.

- Soil and Plant Nutrition Through Organic Fertility by Steve Thomas, U. of Kentucky, Nature Safe - Synthetic nitrogen fertilizers were born in the bomb factories of World War II. We needed to have a way to use leftover nitrate materials.

By using synthetics we quit putting organics into the soil as often as we used to. Carbon is now the missing link. Carbon is the microbes' food. Microbes help make a healthier soil.

After the education program was finished, GCSAA CEO Steve Mona was the featured luncheon speaker, focusing on the state of the association. Highlight's of Mona's presentation can be found in the Professional Development section of this issue.

To wrap up the two-day event, Dr. John Cisar chaired a panel of experts to field any questions from the audience on any topic. Following that discussion, the event was adjourned and CEU and pesticide license forms were handed out and class was dismissed.

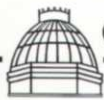
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# Turf BMPs

## *The First Steps Begin in Gainesville*

*Editor's note: Best Management Practices or BMPs is a buzzword just like Integrated Pest Management, better known as IPM. While IPM has gained some recognition and acceptance in the green industry's battle with environmental groups and regulators, BMPs have largely been ignored... until now. With non-point source pollution and TMDL regulations being discussed and implemented, BMPs may be the only way for the green industry to carry out its business and meet the letter of the law. FTGA President Erica Santella has been sitting on Nitrate Working Group meetings and keeping up to date on proposed and enacted local ordinances dealing with fertilizer use. While golf is not mentioned specifically in this article, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that fertilizer regulations will impact golf courses as well as home lawns in a watershed basin. Can you live with proposed turf BMPs outlined by IFAS researchers John Cisar and George Snyder? Better pay attention, study the recommendations and determine if they will work for your situation.*

BY ERICA MARIE SANTELLA

President

Florida Turfgrass Association

**O**n July 7, a meeting in Gainesville was the first step to writing urban turf Best Management Practices (BMPs), which will be a giant force in improving the status of the lawn care industry in the eyes of regulators, legislators, and the public.

Working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, Department of Environmental Protection, five water management districts, the University of Florida and IFAS, the industry will develop BMPs to protect itself and make the public more aware of our professionalism and commitment to protecting the environment. The BMPs submitted to the state are a good

starting point, and Steve Dwinell of DACS was scheduled to host the next meeting in September.

While having DEP-endorsed BMPs will not prevent local governments from initiating ordinances, it will give our industry leverage and confidence to show that further regulations are not needed. The green service industry will have to work hard not only to develop BMPs, but provide technician training, and have a public outreach campaign to stress the need for following BMPs for growing strong and healthy turfgrass.

Dr. Terril Nell, chair of the UF environmental sciences department, hosted the meeting, and the industry appreciates his hospitality. In Gainesville, the following agencies were represented: St. Johns Water Management District,

FDACS, DEP, South Florida Water Management District, Suwanee River Water Management District, Florida Extension Service, and IFAS.

Professional association involvement included Florida Nursery Growers Association, Certified Pest Control Operators of Florida, Florida Pest Control Association, SW Florida Certified Pest Control Operators, and Florida Turfgrass Association. Lesco and TradeMark representatives were also present. Through the use of teleconferencing, close to a dozen people in Ft. Lauderdale were able to attend.

Dr. Nell stressed the need for open discussion, and is enthusiastic about working with the industry on developing turf BMPs. Dr. Brian Unruh, who heads the UF turfgrass program at the West Florida REC in Milton, then related a brief history of the Turf Design Team, which was created four years ago. It has 20 faculty members, and cuts across six departments and four locations.

We learned that all publications go through a review every three years, and many of them are long overdue, including Florida Yards & Neighborhood. He mentioned the nutrient subcommittee, chaired by Dr. Laurie Trenholm, which reviews publications and ensures that recommendations are in line with each other. The subcommittee met with the commercial applicators in March, after the Gainesville Field Day.

FYN is the largest-selling publication, and Dr. Unruh discussed its inception. In the early 1980s, xeriscape was a (trademarked) term formed in Colorado. It focused only on water management. Both FYN and Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) are low-input alternatives to traditional lawn and landscape care.

FYN is funded by a grant to Sarasota Bay and is a model that the EPA is looking at. Dr. Unruh felt strongly that FYN and ELM are low-input options, which led to a discussion of the issue of turf quality, and that the turf industry works to manage turf with as low input as possible, since fertilizers and chemicals are not inexpensive.

Dr. Trenholm then handed out the

IFAS fertilizer rate recommendations. The rates provided are for landscape turf only, not golf courses. The largest landscape turf in Florida by far is St. Augustinegrass, with 75 percent of the acreage. Even if zoysiagrass is only 1 percent of the acreage however, this converts to 20,000 acres. The state was broken into three zones: Northern (down to the Ocala area), Central (to Vero Beach and across to Tampa), and Southern. Rates varied for the three zones, and a range was provided for each species. This sheet will be a part of the discussion of overall turf BMPs.

Next up were Steve Dwinell with DACS, and Mike Thomas, a professional engineer with Department of Environmental Protection. Dwinell stated that BMPs are broad and general, but there is a standard procedure. BMPs are adopted by rule, and provide agricultural industries with relief from water-quality regulations. The philosophy now is to *manage* uses, instead of *restrict* uses (along with fines). Both on a federal and state level, agencies are moving away from regulation.

Three Florida laws provide for adoption of BMPs

1. Agriculture, Chapter 597, which does not apply to the greens service industry.

2. Chapter 576, the Fertilizer law, which has provisions for making property holders exempt from ground water quality. The phrase "property holders" is important, since in the service industry, that means our customers.

3. Chapter 403, which appears to be where our industry falls. There is a section for agricultural non-point issues, which DACS works with. Another section deals with the non-agriculture segment, which works on a basin concept, which DEP administers. The basin concept takes into consideration geographic areas, rivers, bays, etc. While the title "nonagricultural" may seem to deal with urban turf, that was not the intent. For interested parties, Chapter 120 tells specially how a rule is adopted.

Currently, no nonagricultural, non-point, DEP rules have been adopted. DEP just took over this area about a year

ago. The intent behind Chapter 403 is this: if an industry is properly practicing its BMPs, then the onus of any water quality failures are on the state agency, not the land holder. Allocation is the basis of all of these rules. For example, if nitrates are shown to be the biggest problem, that is what is worked on first. The goal is to find out where the problem is coming from and how to stop it.

This started a side discussion of the number of basins in the state. The answer was, "it depends." There are really three big basins in the US: the two oceans and the Gulf of Mexico. However, they are untimely broken down into hundreds of basins. BMPs are typically developed for relatively big basins, such as Okeechobee, and St. Johns.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) were briefly brought up. TMDLs will be established for each element of impairment, such as nitrates, phosphorus, and pesticides. One set of BMPs could cover all of these impairments, which is the direction the industry wants to move our BMPs.

As those of you who are working with the South Florida Water Management District know, some basins are on a fast track for improvement. The C-11 canal in Broward County has a target date they must meet, or face legal consequences.

A question from industry was, "By adopting BMPs, will the industry be immune from local regulation?"

The question we were all waiting for! The answer is, "No, not direct relief from local regulations. A county, city, municipality, could still implement an ordinance or law."

However, by having BMPs which are endorsed (a technical term) by the state, the industry certainly will have a large degree of credibility when working with local regulators. The leverage and confidence our industry stands to gain is tremendous. So from a practical matter, having industry-developed BMPs will be critical to preventing unnecessary and burdensome ordinances attempting to regulate our industry.

Mike Thomas with DEP suggested that we also need to get our BMPs recognized by DEP, although they would not

be adopted by rule. Remember that rule adoption protects the landholder, not the industry. The industry would be extremely proactive and taking the moral high ground by going through the hard work of developing our own BMPs.

Thomas gave an example of how another industry worked to get its BMPs adopted. It involved blended fertilizer plants, and how in the late 1980s, many of these sites were recognized as having tremendous nutrient runoff problems. DEP, DACS and the Tennessee Valley Authority worked with the Florida Fertilizer and Agricultural Chemical Association to come up with BMPs. The secretary of state at the time said that the BMP plan looked good, and the industry adopted the BMPs.

Thomas came on board in 1993, and one of his first projects was to determine how well these BMPs were working in the field. He went to 30 sites around the state, and found a whole range of progress and lack of progress. Where there was good management, understanding, and capital behind them, the BMPs worked.

Some locations had the desire, but not the money or understanding. For example, one location simply paved the surface around their plant, and just moved runoff from one place to another.

Without exception, Ben Hill Griffin's plant in Frostproof was the best plant in the state.

Another problem was that some businesses were not members of the FFACA and were not even aware of the BMP manual for fertilizer plants. Thomas went back to the professional association and worked on not only improving the BMP manual, but also involving nonmembers. FFACA went outside its membership and got everyone up to speed.

FFACA had an Education Outreach Program and hit over 90 percent of the plants. In 1997, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed. This fits in perfectly with our plans of technician training, and working with those currently outside of any professional associations. Remember, that as an industry, we are often judged on the weakest person out there.



The cattlemen are working on their own BMPs, and their goal is to get a letter of endorsement from DEP. Our BMPs would not be formally adopted, but this does not mean that they would not have supreme importance. Imagine the strength in the statement that our industry has Best Management Practices that its members endorse and use. Who would want to use a company not involved in this process? There was a question as to whether BMPs were ever a detriment, or had backfired on an industry. The answer from DACS and DEP both, was a resounding, "No!"

BMPs are not written overnight. They have to be verifiable and need backup. Mark Jennings with the Department of Water Policy, discussed the aquaculture industry.

It is a very diverse group, with food fish, tropical fish, plants, clams, and more. They were divided into commodity groups, and both broad and specific BMPs were developed by the industry. It took time and energy from the industry to accomplish this large task. To reemphasize, BMPs would not give the turf service industry legislative relief, but would give us leverage and credibility. If there is nothing in place, a local regulator would justifiably ask, "Who are you?"

Next we moved onto the definition of BMPs, since there are several. There are Rule BMPs, which are formally adopted and are performance based, and the older, informal based BMPs. "Verification" also has different definitions, depending on the agency involved. Thomas told the group that

DEP is moving somewhat towards Best Professional Judgment, as opposed to monitoring and testing.

Several representatives from water management districts spoke next. Jay Yingling with the Southwest Florida Water Management District felt that the springs and karst areas should be dealt with differently. He also mentioned the Nitrate Remediation Working Group, and the tremendous amount of overlap that occurs in many of these groups.

He also discussed the TMDL, and that the drinking water standard for some nutrients may not be adequate for ecosystems. For example, the drinking water standard for nitrites is 10 ppm, yet flora and fauna are affected a lesser levels.

The industry was next to speak, and the industry is excited about developing its own BMPs. Our professional associations have a lot to offer, not only from input standpoint, but public outreach, and technician training.

Copies of our BMPs were distributed, and briefly reviewed. Dwinell would like to see more numbers: rates, recommendations, etc. These can be references to university publications, as in "See the most recent IFAS Turf recommendations for specific products." This leaves room for professional judgment, while still offering specifics.

One agency representative felt that the document was lacking in irrigation information. The industry is well aware of the part that irrigation plays in plant growth and nutrient movement, and

couldn't agree more! One problem has always been the lack of regulation on installing, maintaining, monitoring and running irrigation systems. It is a very difficult issue for the industry, and has tremendous impact on the amount of inputs required to maintain a Florida lawn.

Bill Donovan with the South Florida Water Management District spoke on general guidelines for BMPs they are looking for, and how soil testing works into their district. He stressed the value of being proactive.

The final segment was on the difference between quality and inputs, and the importance of homeowner education. The green service industry is involved now, and will continue to develop its own BMPs along with the assistance of various agencies. DACS was slated to host the next meeting Sept. 13 in Orlando.

We had a very productive meeting. The industry is ready to develop BMPs and gain credibility, confidence, and leverage. It will not be a quick process, and will involve a tremendous amount of work from the associations and allied members. Education will play a key role. We are taking a proactive role, which will come from a regulatory, legislative, and public relations standpoint.

As a final note, I would like to thank personally Gene Yeady for his role in getting this wide divergence of participants together. Without his hard work and persistence, this meeting would not have happened. We all owe Yeady a debt of gratitude.

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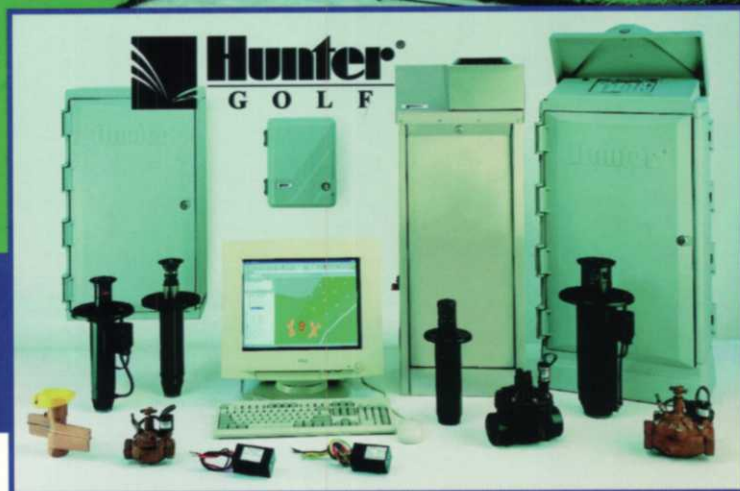


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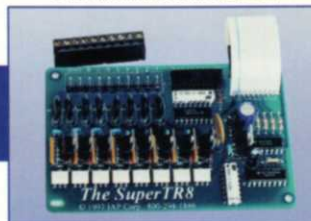
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*Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program*

# Florida Leads the Nation! ... and we have a long way to go

*Sometimes you may think you are doing all the right things for the environment, but are you sure? Audubon International has a tool that can help you evaluate your stewardship score. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

**Florida makes up 9.2 percent of membership in ACSP for golf courses.**

**We lead the country in fully certified golf courses with 33. Illinois is the next with 18, with New York and New Jersey behind them with 12 each**

*Editor's note: We welcome Shelly Foy back to the pages of The Florida Green after a too long absence and look forward to hearing the good news about what our members are doing to showcase the positive aspects of golf and the environment. Shelly, you're on!*

**BY SHELLY FOY**

*Florida ACSP Coordinator  
USGA Green Section*

**A**fter the longest maternity leave in history (or so I have been told), I'm back and ready to work on environmental stewardship in Florida.

Perhaps it was the guilt I felt every time I saw Joel and had to say, "I'll write something for the next issue." Or maybe it was my husband constantly saying, "It's time to get back into your Audubon stuff." Or maybe it was superintendents telling me they were just waiting on me to help them.

Just between you and me, I think it was a little bit of all of those things, and more than a little of Thomas reaching the "terrible twos" and me needing a little break before I lost my mind. Regardless, I am ready to start preaching again, as my friend Greg Plotner calls my urging people to get off their duffs and work on their Audubon programs.

As an avid believer in the Audubon program as a means to strengthen environmental programs on golf courses and promote stewardship efforts of superintendents, I'm once again available for site visits, writing articles, or generally harassing you on a regular basis to get you started. I can be reached at 561-546-2620 or [sfoy@usga.org](mailto:sfoy@usga.org).

This column will be about superintendents and the environmental programs they are working on, as well as environmental topics of interest from around the country. So let me know