

USGA[®]

RESEARCH UPDATE



Selecting Turfgrass Research for the Golf Course

August is when the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee select research proposals for funding. This Green Section program funds, directs and disseminates research assuring the viability of golf.

First, a step back to 1920 when the USGA funded its first turfgrass research. The "Green Section" was then part of the US Department of Agriculture. USDA scientists focused on "the scientific and technical aspects of turfgrass



The USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee visits with University of Georgia faculty and graduate students about funded research projects.

maintenance." In 1946, the Green Section became a department within the USGA with the same mission. Since 1920, the USGA has funded more than \$40 million for turfgrass research. Universities received most of the funding to support graduate students.

Many turfgrass professors received funding as graduate students or have received a USGA grant.

The USGA has a long history supporting grass breeding at several universities. A turfgrass on your golf course likely originated from one of these programs.

Back to 2015 and the committee meeting in August. The process started in April when the Green Section issued a call for proposals. This year, 60 proposals arrived in July for consideration. Green Section staff assembled a 375-page book

for committee members to read. The total funding requested was more than \$4 million.

The research committee discusses each proposal. Comments pertain to scientific soundness, funding, and how important the research is to golf.

Each committee member makes a case for funding or not funding a particular project. Members rate each proposal on a scale from one to nine, with nine being the best. Proposals are then ranked according to their average rating.

At this point, based on available funds, committee members select research projects. The committee accepts the top 15 to 20 ranked projects each year. This results in a three-year funding commitment of one million dollars by the USGA.

The USGA searches for improved turfgrasses or management practices that conserve natural resources. You and the golfers at your course are the beneficiaries of USGA funded research.

Source: Clark Throssell, Ph.D.

Clark Throssell, Ph.D., is a member of the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee and the former director of the Purdue University turf program. He was the director of research for GCSAA and is currently the research editor for Golfdom, focusing on managing the Super Science section of the magazine. He also contributes his "Clark Talks Turf" column to Golfdom every month.