

Surfin' Turf

Bookmark some of these horticultural sites. They contain information that can increase your knowledge.

By DAVID WEINSTOCK AND CURT HARLER

HortWorld

<http://www.hortworld.com>

There are sites on the World Wide Web serving as hubs that consist of large collections of links, usually related in subject matter. These sites are called launch sites. One of the more attractively designed and larger horticultural launch sites is HortWorld. Sponsored by Betrock International Horticultural Network, this site features information of interest to both landscape and turf management professionals.

Turfworld features links to associations, turfgrass Web sites, institutions and a trade shows calendar. It also features an extensive library of research and reference materials on turfgrass disease and management topics from 15 major commercial and educational research institutions.

Another interesting HortWorld feature is PlantSearch Online, a

search engine designed to locate sources of plants for wholesalers. We entered "Japanese yew" into PlantSearch and it generated a list of 35 sources. Each source had a name, address, telephone number, a letter-coded description of the requested stock and a dated listing of its entire inventory. If the source has a Web site, their name was published as a link.

HortWorld also features a linked list of addresses and homepages of botanical gardens in the United States — required reading for vacationing landscape and turf professionals who just can't get enough green!

Florida Plants Online

<http://www.floridaplants.com>

What is it about Florida and Web sites?! Last time we went turf surfing, we unearthed the delightful and informative floridaturf.com. This time, we found Florida Plants Online.

This site is GIGANTIC...and did we mention, beautifully designed (not that we're gushing, or anything)? For Florida landscapers, this is the must-see site, just as floridaturf.com is the required stop for all surfing Florida turfgrass professionals.

Florida Plants Online covers just about every facet of botany within the geographical confines of the state of Florida. Landscaping, design, agriculture, horticulture, mangroves, aquascaping, nurseries, tree canopies...and that is just a little more than half the subject matter available here.



Each page is tastefully laid out with linked subjects on the left and a beautiful close-up photograph of a Florida plant or animal on the right. Backgrounds are white framed in green.

In addition to all the professional material, this site also has an informative section designed for children called the "Young Naturalist." It features some pages for coloring as well as a number of Web links to sites featuring photographs of Florida plants and animals and their habitats.

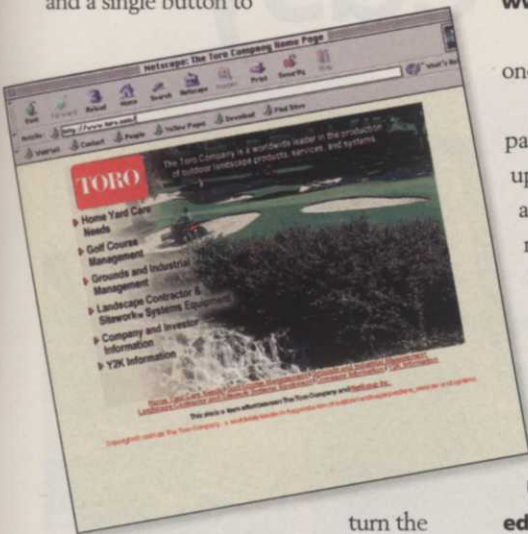
Leigh M. Fulghum, site editor, is a professional botanist who has worked in south Florida as a landscape designer for 23 years. He grows red mangroves for aquarium supply and coastal restoration plantings. A "silent partner," Dan Remy, is owner of a landscape contracting/maintenance/arborist company. Two years ago, Fulghum convinced Remy that they should do some sort of Internet promotion concerned with plant and landscape sales. "For the most part, I just dove in to the net, amazed at how much scientific, horticultural and botanical material was published by research institutions in particular," he says. "It was clear to me that the wealth of information that is available would doubtlessly overwhelm the typical Florida homeowner with landscape questions. Accordingly, I embarked on organizing pointers to the most sought after information about Florida native and exotic plants, and every aspect of their presence in this state, to help citizens empower themselves with good plant information."



The Toro Company

<http://www.toro.com>

An engineer we once knew remarked that the early Volkswagen Beetles were machines that were beautiful in their simplicity. The dashboard instruments consisted of nothing more than a speedometer, a radio and a single button to



turn the headlights off and on.

Similar spartan elegance earned The Toro Company's Web site its place in this month's Surf'n Turf column.

The Toro Company has created the kind of site Web denizens have come to expect from a commercial firm. It is slick and full of professional-grade photography of people sitting atop Toro lawnmowers or working with other assorted pieces of red equipment. And like many corporate sites, the designers opted for the conservative approach.

But what is working on this site is its organization. Turf surfers will waste no time here because its designers opted to use a straightforward menu system on the site's front page. The opening page features five links to take visitors to view specific and distinct product lines: home machines, golf course management, grounds management, landscaping and recycling and debris management. There is a sixth link for company information. Links take visitors to still

more tastefully done pages that feature short text descriptions accompanied by more professional photography that depicts various Toro products.

In short, it is Web advertising done right — even if a bit conservative.

Texas Turfgrass Association
www.texasurf.com

If you're a Texan, this site should be one of your bookmarks.

The Texas Turfgrass Association has a page where prospective members can sign up. But more important is the questions-and-answers section. Looking for information about a particular seed variety? Got red rust on ryegrass? Have a vexing problem with insects? Post a question to the bulletin board and look for a practical, helpful answer from another member or someone in the industry within a couple of hours.

University of Florida
edis.ifas.ufl.edu

If Bahia, Bermuda, St. Augustine or zoysiagrass are part of your daily work schedule, check out the Florida Agricultural Information Retrieval System. Get to the opening page at www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu and there is a variety of quick links to insect, seed, fertilization, safety and other agronomic information.

Want to know how to manage nematodes? How to establish a Florida lawn? Or looking for weed management tips for Florida turfgrass pros? They all are on the University of Florida site.

There are several "extras" at this site, including a scrolling update of activities and news, a trivia slot (did you know the Florida Lubber grasshopper can reach three inches in length?) and easy links. But best of all is the true search engine on the home page that allows you to type in keyword searches just as one would on Yahoo! or Alta Vista.

University of Illinois
Turfgrass Program
<http://www.turf.uiuc.edu>



Forget, for a minute, that this site is dedicated to promoting a university program. Forget, too, that it is one of the better-designed sites we reviewed for this article.

What makes this site great is its dedication to the Internet tradition of passing visitors along to the next best site. It has the best collection of links we've seen thus far (bar none!) to help lawn care and turfgrass professionals navigate this worldwide network of computer networks.

It is also worth mentioning here that the only other site that came close to the Illinois site's links collection is the Sydney Cricket and Football Stadium links page. But that site was slightly less discriminating than this one.

That's a key point. Illinois' Web site isn't listed because of the sheer volume of its links. Rather, it seems its webmasters cast their discriminating eyes over the hundreds of turfgrass links available on the Web and chose the ones they thought were the most information-rich.

The opening menu of its links collection has 13 category listings, ranging from commercial links, to education, to instructional sites on pests, diseases, chemicals and management topics. Each category, depicted as a file folder, contains either subdirectories or direct links, some containing more than others do. **LM**

—The authors are freelance writers who peruse the Web regularly for new and fascinating green industry sites.