

SEA TO SAND

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE HI-LO DESERT & GCSASC | VOLUME 20 | ISSUE 1 | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

Tustin Ranch Golf Club

*Host of the GCSASC Spring Meeting,
April 28, 2022*

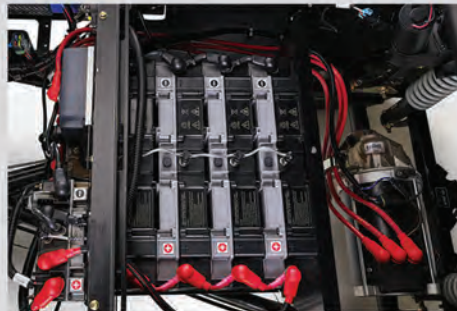
FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

- *USGA Article: Looking For a Few Good Assistants*
- *UCR Turfgrass Research Projects*
- *Upcoming Events*

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Executive Director's Report

By Marc Connerly, Executive Director, GCSASC and Hi-Lo Desert GCSA



Welcome to the first issue of *Sea to Sand* for 2022. For the first time in nearly two years, it seems that we are able to plan events as usual, with minimal fear of inconvenient restrictions or cancellation. The challenge now, with courses as busy as they are, is finding suitable and available venues for our events.

The year started with a couple of excellent events, both featuring Dr. Jim Baird and an update on UCR turf research projects. Dr. Baird spoke to GCSASC members at Strawberry Farms in January, along with a panel focused on transitioning between superintendent, sales rep and General Manager. Robert Hertzling (Lakeside Golf Club), Ron Kerley (Saticoy Regional Golf Course) and Steve Plummer (Agri-Turf Distributing) sat on the panel and shared with attendees their tips and lessons learned from serving in multiple capacities in the golf business.

Dr. Baird also presented in February to Hi-Lo Desert GCSA attendees at Desert Willow Golf Resort. In addition to sharing UCR's latest turf research findings, he presented seed trials taking place at Desert Willow. The event was sponsored by Turf Star, Stover Seed and Columbia River Seed.

We have two exciting spring events upcoming, and GCSASC in particular has made a commitment to recruit new and creative speakers and topics. Showing their commitment to improved event quality, the GCSASC Board has agreed to pay expenses to bring in two out of state speakers for our next event.

That event will occur on Thursday, April 28, at Tustin Ranch Golf Club, and will feature 35 year superintendent Shawn Emerson (formerly of Desert Mountain Golf Club) and Doug Soldat (University of Wisconsin-Madison professor and co-owner of the GreenKeeper app).

Shawn will cover a variety of topics, from managing a diverse workforce and hosting PGA events to life after being a superintendent, and Doug will share some very interesting research on growth rate and traffic.

The spring Hi-Lo Desert event will also feature a fresh presentation, as Jared Stanek of Toscana Country Club will host, and Spreck Energy will be on hand to explain the recent solar project completed at Toscana. Nutrien's Jeff Stephenson will also present at this event.

GCSASC is actively seeking a venue for our S & R tournament, so if your course has availability in June or July, please get in touch with me. We are also seeking a venue for a September meeting, and encourage you to save the date for our Annual Meeting, which will be held on Monday, November 14, at Red Hill Country Club. The Duff Shaw Classic will occur on Monday, December 12.

Hi-Lo Desert GCSA hopes to announce a June meeting soon, and is close to finalizing a date in September for the S & R at Ironwood Country Club.

We hope to see you at an association event soon, and as always, please reach out to me at (916) 214-6495 or mconnerly@connerlyandassociates.com with any questions or requests.

Marc Connerly



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From The Field

By Jeff Jensen • GCSAA Field Staff • Southwest Region



Thank you to all of the Hi-Lo Desert and GCSA of Southern California members who joined us in San Diego for the 2022 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show and Golf Championships. After going virtual in 2021, it was great to see so many familiar faces around the city and convention center enjoying the opportunity to learn and network with their peers.

In addition to the great education and products on the show floor, there were a lot of highlights throughout the week in San Diego, including the election of GCSAA's

Board of Directors. California's own Kevin Breen, CGCS, was elected the 86th President of GCSAA. Kevin serves as the Superintendent at La Rinconada Country Club in Los Gatos. Kevin Sunderman, CGCS, will serve as Vice President with Jeff White, CGCS, being elected as Secretary/Treasurer. Doug Dykstra, CGCS, and Marc Weston, CGCS, were both re-elected to the board and were joined by the newly elected Steve Hammond of Traverse City Country Club in Michigan.

The GCSAA dues adjustment passed overwhelmingly, with over 96 percent voting in favor of the adjustment, which is based on CPI. Dues for Class A & B will now be \$430, with Class C members at \$220. The entire outcome of the meeting, including voting results can be viewed at <https://www.gcsaa.org/about-gcsaa/annual-meeting/2022/2022-annual-meeting-results>.

The GCSAA Golf Championships were held Feb. 5-7 at San Diego area golf facilities, including Bernardo Heights Country Club, Encinitas Ranch Golf Club, Singing Hills Golf Resort, and Torrey Pines. 400 players turned out to support the championships, with Seth Strickland of Miami Shores Country Club (Fla.) winning his fifth GCSAA National Championship, recording a two-day score of 5-over-par 149. Low Californian was Mike Stieler of Spring Creek Golf & Country Club in Ripon tying for fourth at 9-over-par 153.

The Hi-Lo Desert's own Jared Stanek won the Health in Action 5K with a blistering time of 18:16. He must be running around Toscana in the mornings as opposed to riding the course! Congrats, Jared!

While this year's show may have been smaller than in the past, it certainly didn't lack content and a lot of excitement, and we truly appreciate the support of our members, vendors, partners, and sponsors who make it a success. It's a step in the right direction and I hope it encourages you to consider attending some of the upcoming chapter events that Hi-Lo and Southern California will be hosting.

As always, if I can be of any assistance to you, please don't hesitate to contact me at jjensen@gcsaa.org and make sure to visit my regional website at <https://www.gcsaa.org/resources/regional-resources/southwest> to keep up on the latest happenings in the region. Hope you all have a great Spring golf season!

Jeff Jensen

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Looking for a Few Good Assistants

By Bradley S. Klein

(Reprinted courtesy of the United States Golf Association, www.usga.org)

Shaun Mitchell, superintendent at Whitinsville Golf Club in Massachusetts, has been looking for a qualified assistant for a year now – to no avail. The ad he posted in standard industry outlets has yielded not a single inquiry. It is a common plight across the country.

It's not as if Whitinsville, a modestly funded golf course in central Massachusetts, is a dead-end job. The Donald Ross gem, opened in 1927, is regularly ranked among the top nine-hole courses in the country – and even the world. Its last two superintendents moved on to fine jobs at 18-hole courses. One of them,

Dave Johnson, is now at The Country Club in Brookline, where he will tend to the 2022 U.S. Open.

In an effort to make the job at Whitinsville more enticing, Mitchell is seeking permission from his club to raise the starting salary offer by \$10,000 to bring it into the mid-sixties, and that still might not be enough. The problem with the position that Mitchell seeks to fill is not just a matter of money. There is simply a shortage of qualified assistant superintendents and demand far outstrips supply. While there is reason to be optimistic that the problem might be resolved in the long run through a market correction, golf courses have to be maintained in the short run. That's where nerves are fraying and patience running thin.

Out in Menlo Park, California, veteran superintendent Josh Lewis, formerly of Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club, relies upon a network he's been cultivating for years to find qualified assistants. Besides posting on websites he "beats the bushes," as he calls it, working a coterie of championship-tier courses like The Olympic Club and Pebble Beach, and asking the superintendents there about promising interns. It helps that volunteers from a wide range of clubs also circulate through venues like that during major tournaments. Lewis' preference is to find someone with aptitude and interest who might still be new to taking on responsibility – someone who wants to continue learning and advancing their skill set. "I like to find them green and moldable," he said.

It helps that Sharon Heights is committed to promoting staff development. "The club has a member-supported scholarship program for all employees," said Lewis. On the turf side that might include making it possible for an intern or assistant in training (AIT) to get a two-year or four-year degree, either through attending classes in person or online.

Major tournaments draw course maintenance volunteers from around the country, many of whom would be great candidates for assistant superintendent positions.

David Swift, superintendent at Minnehaha Country Club in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is among the industry veterans who has had to scramble to find good help. With the four-year turfgrass program at South Dakota State University in Brookings, 55 miles to the north, having shut down in the last decade, Swift now recruits students from Southeast Technical College in town, which offers eight-week and two-year vocational turfgrass programs.

(Continued on page 11)

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(Continued from page 9)

“Not too many graduates of Penn State or Rutgers are coming out here to start as assistants,” said Swift. So, he draws laborers from the local market, many of them as interns who are getting their technical training at Southeast Tech. “We work them,” he said, “and at \$15 per hour they are not going to get rich, but they are learning. It’s a good, healthy job and some of them catch the bug and want to move up. That’s when they can begin focusing on specific skills and move up into the ranks of AITs.”



Major tournaments draw course maintenance volunteers from around the country, many of whom would be great candidates for assistant superintendent positions.

Today’s need for on-the-job training of potential assistants differs markedly from the late 1990s and early 2000s, when aspiring assistants were usually recruited fresh out of a four-year turfgrass program. Back then, turf schools with two- or four-year programs were well stocked and clubs had their pick. But enrollments started to dwindle and the result is that now, a decade later, the shelves are bare of highly educated candidates for assistant superintendent positions.

“There was a steady decline in enrollments since the end of the golf boom, in about 2005,” reports Dr. Trey Rogers, professor of turfgrass management at Michigan State University, a national powerhouse in the field. The program he manages had 200 students enrolled in 2000. Last year there were 44, but this year the numbers are up to 64.

Several decades of declining enrollment in turf programs contributed to today’s shortage of assistants. The good news is that enrollment is trending upward again. (Penn State Turfgrass)

At Pennsylvania State University, another leader in turfgrass education, professor of turfgrass science Dr. John Kaminski reports a similar picture. “In the late 1990s we had about 250 students in the four-year program,” he said. “Now it’s about 80, but the good news is we’re seeing a rebound in enrollments in both the four-year and the two-year program.”

Turf school registration is tied to the economy at large and to the golf industry as a whole, though these effects can have a time lag that’s hard to pin down. The enrollment boom seems to have been a response to the 1990s golf boom, when superintendent careers seemed attractive and jobs were plentiful. But as the number of golf courses began contracting and veteran superintendents held on to their jobs through the Great Recession, there was a stifling of upward mobility among the ranks of the assistants and less desire for turf programs.

Maintenance team members at the hourly and intern levels who might have considered a career in the turfgrass maintenance business heard discouraging words, not encouragement, from in-house assistants who were unable to move on. Their frustration with career stagnation may have unintentionally driven people who might have succeeded them into other industries that seemed to offer more opportunity.

The loss of caddie programs that brought teens into the game also eliminated a traditional entry portal for those who might have considered a career in golf course maintenance. Equally stifling, but difficult to measure, was a generational shift in attitudes toward work. Beyond a love of golf, perhaps the most important attribute for someone considering a career in course maintenance is a willingness – or at least the ability – to show up for work at 5 a.m., including weekends.

An assistant superintendent’s job often requires early mornings and long hours, but many courses are trying to be more flexible to help assistants achieve a better work-life balance.

The industry ethos a generation ago was dictated by a hard-nosed approach to the job, one which valued long hours on site and total emotional commitment. Golf industry labor consultant Tyler Bloom believes this attitude contributed to many leaving the profession, combined with the lack of growth potential compared to other industries.

(Continued on page 13)



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(Continued from page 11)

Bloom, who heads his own eponymous consulting firm out of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, holds a four-year turf degree from Penn State and has enough experience as a former superintendent to have credibility as an industry insider intent on helping his colleagues recruit and train more efficiently and with longer-lasting results. Chief among his strategies is emphasizing workforce development systems that recruit from within existing communities, structured on-the-job training and a “people first” culture.

In consulting with clubs and through presentations to trade associations, Bloom emphasizes what he calls a “build-from-within approach.” That means developing an in-house apprenticeship program that focuses on mastering specific skills and developing the leadership an employer needs versus general entry-level work experience. It is a strategy he recommends for every level of a club’s operation – not just course maintenance but food and beverage as well. However, this strategy is especially well suited to developing a pipeline of assistant superintendents because the job entails a combination of technical expertise, unusual hours and physical labor.

He also recommends adjusting the workplace culture to one that is more accommodating to people’s diverse needs, with work/life balance a crucial element in the next generation’s understanding of what makes for a sensible career.

Teaching kids about careers in golf course maintenance through programs like the First Green or LPGA*USGA Girls Golf is a key part of developing the assistant superintendents of tomorrow.

Cultivating talent from within is central to the operation that superintendent Chris Tritabaugh runs at Hazeltine National Golf Club in the Minneapolis suburb of Chaska. His recruitment approach includes the opportunity to move up the ladder, from intern positions to AITs, technicians, and one of three assistant posts. He has also explored tying in the seasonal nature of work at Hazeltine with an equally prestigious club or two in the South whose seasonal calendar runs opposite to his. “Hire the person, then train them,” he said. “It also helps to be able to provide them with seasonal housing as well as educational opportunities,” said Tritabaugh.



*Teaching kids about careers in golf course maintenance through programs like the First Green or LPGA*USGA Girls Golf is a key part of developing the assistant superintendents of tomorrow.*



Several decades of declining enrollment in turf programs contributed to today’s shortage of assistants. The good news is that enrollment is trending upward again. (Penn State Turfgrass)

Across the industry, the emphasis upon recruiting and developing assistants involves growing the labor pool and drawing more interested people into the industry. At the introductory level, a program like the Golf Course Superintendents Association’s First Green can open up students’ eyes to the golf course as an interesting place and to golf course maintenance as a rewarding career. Tritabaugh also credits Toro’s in-house Assistants Experience and similar industry events and programming that helps promising candidates appreciate the full range of skills needed beyond one’s formal education.

One thing is for sure – the less an assistant’s post is seen as an arduous, make-or-break test and the more it is embraced as a moment in the unfolding of one’s engagement with life, nature and people, the more it will attract talented young men and women. Pay is an issue – it always is – but so is the head superintendent’s willingness to flex on everything from hours and days off to who they hire and what their work background is. Golf needs assistant superintendents – both for their contributions today and for their role as the superintendents of tomorrow. Finding ways to make their job worth training for and doing is a critical challenge facing the game today.

Brad Klein is a veteran freelance journalist whose biography, "Discovering Donald Ross," won the Herbert Warren Wind Book Award for 2001.



“Where’s Zena?”

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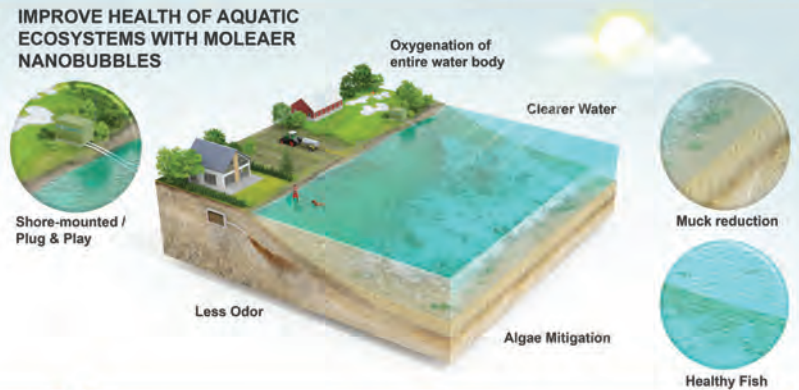
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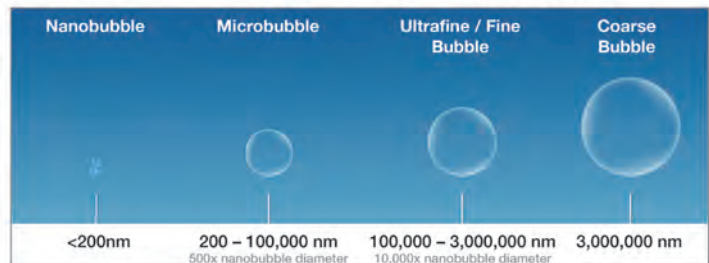
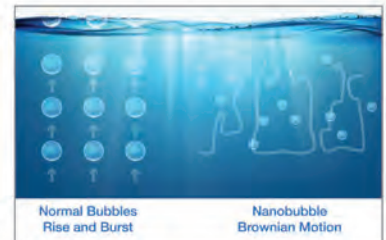
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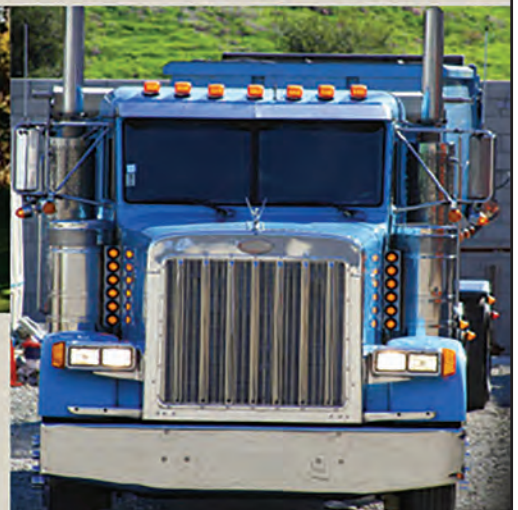
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2021 UCR Turfgrass Research Projects

56 research projects ongoing or planned for UC Riverside Turfgrass Science

As of the end of 2021, the UC Riverside Turfgrass Science program was in the midst of or planning 56 turfgrass research projects, including:

- 11 Breeding & Genetics
- 8 Water Conservation & Salinity Management
- 37 Pest Management

The projects are taking place at 23 different golf courses or sod farms, including 7 locations in Southern California and the Coachella Valley.

Below are the results of several of UCR's recently completed studies.

Breeding, Genetics, and Species/Cultivar Evaluation

Turfgrass Species: Bermudagrass

Location: Riverside, CA; Thermal, CA; Napa GC, CA, Preserve GC, Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA, Shadow Creek GC, Las Vegas, NV

Emphasis: species/cultivar evaluation; water conservation

Title: Improvement of Bermudagrass for Winter Color Retention and Drought Tolerance

Study Directors: Marta Pudzianowska, Christian Bowman, Adam Lukaszewski and Jim Baird

Duration: January 2017 to December 2021

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: USGA, MWD, WMWD

Description and Notable Results: Development of new hybrids via one-on-one crosses and evaluation of generated lines continues. Two superior lines, UCR 17-8 and UCR TP6-3 were selected after years of selection and planted for large scale and demonstration studies. Screening of nurseries established in 2018 and 2019 led to selection of 24 UCR hybrids for rough/residential lawns and 48 hybrids for golf course fairways. Out of those, 35 hybrids selected for golf course fairways were planted in 2021 shade trial in Riverside, CA. Hybrids from 2014 nursery for rough/residential lawns hybrids are being tested in Thermal, CA and Carmel-by-the-Sea. Study started in 2019. Higher variation in quality among entries was observed in Thermal, CA than in Carmel-by-the-Sea. The best performing entries in Thermal were UCR BH 17-1 and 'Bandera', while in Carmel-by-the-Sea UCR BH4-5. Among 4 UCR hybrids and 7 cultivars tested on 2 fairways in Napa, CA, the best performing entries in terms of overall quality were UCR 17-8, 'Latitude 36', UCR TP6-3 and Santa Ana. The best color retention showed UCR 17-8, UCR TP6-3, 'Santa Ana', 'TifTuf' and UCR BF2, but 'TifTuf' and 'Santa Ana' were producing more seedheads. Among 21 UCR entries and 4 commercial checks tested in Las Vegas, NV the best performance showed so far 'TifTuf', 'Latitude 36', UCR 180146 and UCR 190127.

Turfgrass Species: Bermudagrass

Location: Riverside, CA

Emphasis: Drought tolerance

Title: Selecting for enhanced drought tolerance among bermudagrass under prolonged drought conditions

Study Directors: Christian Bowman, Marta Pudzianowska and Jim Baird

Duration: June 2021 to November 2021 (Annually)

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: USGA, MWD, WMWD

Description and Notable Results: 76 accessions, including 5 commercial checks, evaluated under two subsequent dry down periods for drought tolerance. Research has highlighted multiple experimental accessions that outperform commercial cultivars (Bandera, Celebration, Santa Ana, TifTuf II, Tifway) when comparing living green coverage.

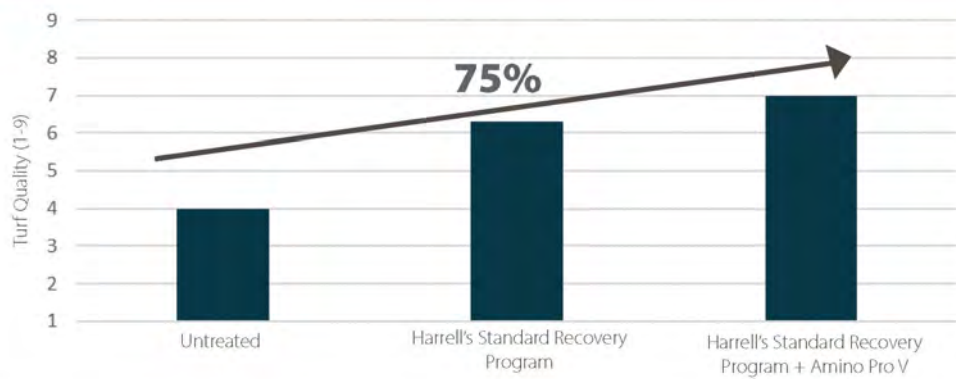
(Continued on page 20)

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October 30, 2018
Ohio State University



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(Continued from page 18)

Turfgrass Species: Kikuyugrass

Location: Riverside, CA

Emphasis: species/cultivar evaluation; water conservation

Title: Improvement of Kikuyugrass for Winter Color Retention and Drought Tolerance

Study Directors: Marta Pudzianowska, Christian Bowman, Adam Lukaszewski and Jim Baird

Duration: January 2017 to December 2021

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: USGA, MWD, WMWD

Description and Notable Results: Development of new lines via one-on-one crosses and selfing of hybrids, and evaluation of generated lines continues. After evaluation of collection accessions and hybrids, 40 entries were selected for further evaluation. 17 of them, together with 'Whittet' as a commercial standard, were planted in newly established shade trial. Most of the lines show good winter color retention. There is not much variation in texture, however some lines show finer texture and less aggressive growth. Differences in flowering intensity and susceptibility to gray leaf spot were observed, with few lines rarely exerting anthers.

Water Conservation and Salinity Management

Emphasis: soil surfactants

Title: Evaluation of Experimental Soil Surfactants to Alleviate Drought Stress

Study Directors: Matteo Serena and Jim Baird

Turfgrass Species: Bermudagrass 'Princess 77'

Location: Riverside, CA

Duration: June to November 2021

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: Simplot Partners, Rhizolutions, Exacto Inc.

Description and Notable Results: Bermudagrass plots are irrigated at 4 different levels of ETo (45, 55, 65, and 75%) and soil surfactants are applied at 4 wk intervals. Results will include potential benefits in maintaining higher turfgrass quality with reduced irrigation regimes.

Emphasis: soil surfactants

Title: Evaluation of Soil Surfactants and other Products to Alleviate Drought Stress

Study Directors: Matteo Serena and Jim Baird

Turfgrass Species: Bermudagrass 'Santa Ana'

Location: Riverside, CA

Duration: June to November 2021

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: Exacto Inc., Brandt, and Intelligro

Description and Notable Results: Bermudagrass plots are irrigated at 2 different levels of ETo (45 and 75%) and soil surfactants are applied at 2- or 4-wk intervals. Some products are in a granular form while others are liquid. Results will include potential benefits in maintaining higher turfgrass quality with reduced irrigation regimes.

Emphasis: soil surfactants and soil health

Title: Evaluation of a new soil surfactant on soil health characteristics

Study Directors: Matteo Serena and Jim Baird

Turfgrass Species: Bermudagrass 'Bandera'

Location: Riverside, CA

Duration: July to December 2021

Funding Sources Outside of CTLF: JRX Biotechnology

Description and Notable Results: Bermudagrass is maintained under normal fairway regimes, with no particular stress imposed. An experimental soil surfactant is applied at 4-wk intervals. Soil samples are collected three times during the season, and will be sent to a lab for soil health characterizations. Results will include potential benefits in promoting soil health benefits, and therefore water conservation.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Tuesday, May 24
Hi-Lo Desert GCSA Spring Meeting
Toscana Country Club

Presentations:
 Spreck Energy (solar)
 Jeff Stephenson, Nutrien Ag Solutions

Watch for more details soon!



Thursday, April 28
GCSASC Spring Meeting
Tustin Ranch Golf Club

Presentations:
 Shawn Emerson, 35 year Superintendent career
 Doug Soldat, University of Wisconsin/Co-owner
 GreenKeeper app

Register online at www.gcsasc.com/events



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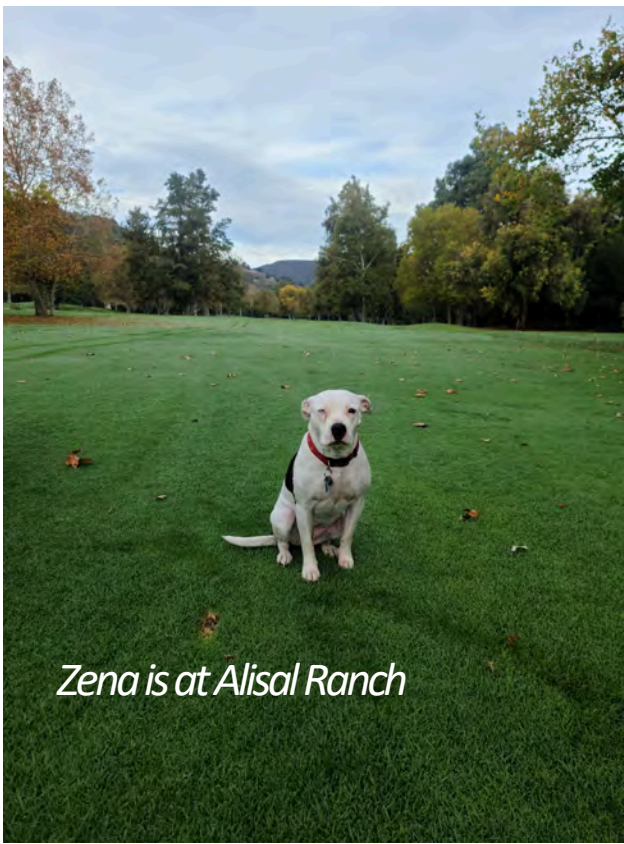
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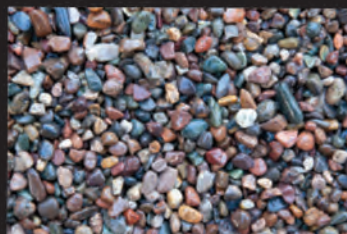


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