

Addressing Your Challenges at the Fall Meeting & Trade Show

This fall you have the opportunity to dive into wetting agents, discuss an integrated weed management program, learn what to consider when renovating your irrigation system, discuss how the turf care center is the launching pad for safe and efficient golf course management operations, just to mention a portion of the learning opportunities offered the first two days. And on the third day, we offer a special session to address the lessons learned from an experienced superintendent to benefit both your facility and your own leadership role.

Join us at the Peaks & Prairies GCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show, October 29-31, 2024, at the Billings Hotel & Convention Center for this opportunity to enjoy the following slate of speakers that include newly invited experts and returning favorites, as well as presentations from two practicing superintendents. We all know



that it only takes that one “ah-ha” moment to make the time and financial commitment worthwhile.

Doug Karcher, Ph.D., (left) has been widely known for his extensive knowledge of numerous subjects over the years, including wetting agents — our selected topic for the upcoming meeting. Karcher was awarded two US patents for inventions related to determining nitrogen levels and quality characteristics in plant systems using

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PPGCSA Upcoming Events:

PPGCSA Wyo. Scholarship/Education Golf Event - September 26

Fall Meeting & Trade Show - October 29 - 31, 2024

Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Billings, Mont.

Private Webcast, PPGCSA - January 2025 (TBA)

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room - San Diego, Calif.,

Blind Burro, Feb. 5, 2025

PPGCSA “Almost” Spring Meeting - March 3-4, 2025, GranTree

Bozeman, Mont.

A Perfect Chance for Great Golf!

Enjoy fall golf at our 2024 Wyoming Scholarship/Education Golf Tournament at The Powder Horn, Sheridan, Wyo., Thursday, September 26, at 11:00 a.m. Registration is open now for the four-person scramble event. Partial teams are welcome to play and will be paired. Please register by September 19 so the course may prepare for your participation. Hole sponsors or hole + display sponsors are welcome for a fee, and due by September 10 to ensure a sign.



You need — and deserve — an opportunity to check in and find out what is going on in the region. Every time you come together it is a learning experience. Sign up now! Our hosts, Justin Bishop, Jason Busch, and Trent Dillinger all look forward to seeing you on September 26!



Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room & Hotel Block

The location and experience was fantastic the first time, so we were quick to jump on the opportunity to return to The Blind Burro for the Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room, February 5, 2025, in San Diego held in conjunction with the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. This great evening with friends and colleagues is made possible by our generous sponsors in the Northwest. And our three-chapter room block in San Diego will be at the San Diego Marriott Gaslamp Quarter — see our email blasts.



“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”

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President's Message

Why Do We Do It

Garrett Turner, The Reserve at Moonlight Basin
Big Sky, Mont.

It's hard to believe we're already into August. It feels like yesterday we were preparing for opening the course and now it's apparent during my morning commute the days are getting shorter and our biggest event of the year is less than a few weeks away. How the time flies during the summer seems to sneak up on me every year, but with how busy all of us are, it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone how we can look back and say, "Where does the time go?"

Occasionally I find myself reflecting on being in the golf course industry and ask myself, what else would I be doing with my time if I wasn't on the course every day? As I mentioned in a previous article, my decision to get involved in golf course management was fairly spontaneous, without much information about what I was signing up for. At that point in my life, I knew I needed a professional goal to work toward and spending time on a golf course was something I always enjoyed. These thoughts of a different career path often lead me back to a comment made by the first superintendent I worked for during my first internship at a golf course. As I was introduced to the superintendent by the first assistant, he said something along the lines of, "So you're getting into golf course management, god if I only knew what I know now at your age." I was taken aback a bit by the comment, and I remember specifically the look on his face after he said it. He must have thought, "Did I just say that out loud?"

That comment years ago resurfaces after we get deeper into the summer and we're battling all the challenges we all face every season on the course. Finding and training staff, many of whom have never stepped foot on a golf course, and diagnosing irrigation issues, disease pressure, and equipment malfunctions are just a few of the daily stresses for a turf manager. Stack all of these on top of how so much of the product we provide to our members and guests can be dictated by the weather, and


there are a handful of days I ask myself, "Why am I doing this?" I swear Mother Nature somehow discovers when the bulk of our crew starts in May each year and delivers a foot of snow. The work on a golf course is never-ending, even after completing daily setup there are always bunkers to weed, hand watering, and countless other tasks that start over once we've made our way through all 18 holes. Sometimes I envy the individuals who can simply shut down their computers, lock the doors, and close shop for the day while leaving their work at work. While these thoughts are rare, there are days when it's hard not to think about other professions where, in my opinion, life might be a lot less stressful.

Conversely, one of my favorite aspects of the profession is how rarely I check the time during the day. I recall some of the jobs I had before and during college counting the hours down until the end of my shift and it was time to go home. At the course it's the opposite, and I'm often surprised when the day is already ending and I'm scrambling to finish a few more tasks before heading down the hill. It's these moments that make me grateful for how quickly time flies at work, a sign that I'm engaged and enjoying what I do.

Having spent over 20 summers on a golf course, it's hard to imagine a career that doesn't involve being outside most of the day. As turf managers we literally walk on or hopefully play a few holes on the product we provide for our members and guests. Each day brings a unique set of challenges and a variety of tasks which provide immediate feedback on our work, instilling a sense of pride in our daily accomplishments. If I had chosen a different career path, I'm not sure I would feel the same sense of fulfillment I experience every day on the golf course.



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In Remembrance of Patrick Mudd

Chris Cremer, GCS
Kendrick Golf Course, Sheridan, Wyo.

Patrick Thomas Mudd, age 48, passed away surrounded by his family and close friends on July 14, 2024 in Billings, Mont. He was in his fourth season as assistant superintendent at Kendrick Golf Course in Sheridan, Wyo., and he loved his time in the golf industry. He recently finished his three-week turfgrass management course through Rutgers and was looking forward to completing the Toro Turf Technician Training program this winter. Patrick's contagious laugh and positive attitude will be greatly missed around the maintenance facility at Kendrick, as well as throughout the turfgrass community.

Patrick loved spending time with his family and was an avid hunter, cook, and golfer. He especially stood out as a hockey player and coach. Patrick was an integral part of the Sheridan Amateur Hockey Association where he coached at every level. His warm presence and love for life helped create an outstanding environment at Kendrick Golf Course, at the hockey rink, and all around Sheridan. He is survived by his children Taylor, Riley, Parker, Charlie, and Oscar, and by his partner, Jenn Gage.

In the middle of the season, it can be difficult to take a break and appreciate all that we have. Our employees, coworkers,



friends and family all play a massive role in the success we have as professionals. I urge everyone to take some time and be thankful for the love and support that we have in our lives. Patrick taught me more about enjoying life than I ever taught him about managing turf, and for that I will be forever thankful. He was one of the best coworkers, role models, and friends that I will ever know. Rest in Peace, Mudd.

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A Critical and Helpful Asset

**Brett Weidler, Assistant Superintendent
Laurel Country Club, Laurel, Mont.**



*H*aving a trained and confident assistant superintendent can be a critical and helpful asset to helping the golf course succeed. The assistant can be the bridge between the superintendent and the rest of the employees, helping with everyday

duties and maintaining a productive workday, while helping to keep the superintendent free to handle other matters that arise. How the assistant will perform may largely depend on how she/he was trained to run the crew and course.


As an assistant, it is your responsibility to learn from your superintendent to help prepare you for when it's your time to take the reins, so to speak. Taking the knowledge and skills you've learned from your superintendent, and the seminars you have access to taking or any schooling background you have, will help shape you to build a successful program to maintain your golf course and your crew. Watch how your superintendent operates the crew by assigning duties and tasks to the right employees to optimize good time management of what seems like a workday that continues to get shorter and shorter. Learn to always be looking at and watching your golf course for little things that catch your eye, whether it is something as small as raking up apples that have fallen around an apple tree, or a bigger project such as noticing that a bunker needs to be re-edged and a new face built. Everything comes together to improve both the overall look and the playability of the course. There is always something to be done on the course and it's up to you to help your superintendent keep work production up and to keep people moving.

Your superintendent will also start relying on you to help lead some of the bigger projects while they are off looking over the rest of the course and crew. The more skills you learn, the

more opportunities your super will give you — from rebuilding a bunker to rebuilding a tee box, for example. You are also the first line of defense for your superintendent. An emergency comes up and they have to be gone, they will rely on you to fill their shoes in their absence. As your confidence grows and your superintendent's confidence in you grows, they might even start taking vacations in the summer and leave you in charge. And we all know, it's not often that a superintendent, or even an assistant, is able to take a real vacation in the peak summer season. And knowing your super feels comfortable enough to leave you in charge is a big pat on the back for any assistant.

In conclusion, an assistant will have many different roles and learning experiences that will help to guide their career as an assistant, and hopefully onward when given the chance to be a superintendent. Assistants should take every learning opportunity to further their education and learn as much as possible from the people around in the same profession. Being an assistant is an important role in any golf course and a stepping stone for your career.





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To Pump or Not to Pump

Kory Bakkum

Old Baldy Golf Course, Townsend, MT

Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start...

Old Baldy is a small, nine-hole course with a view of Mount Baldy from every hole.

We are on the honor system for green fees. People pay in the shed and enjoy a round of golf. We pick the range using shag bags because it's a field of gophers and bunchgrass. There is no pro shop, bar or restaurant. The bathrooms are seasonal, except for the two porta potties on the course. The clubhouse temperature (hot or cold) depends on whether we open windows. We do have a ... pop machine.

I started working at Old Baldy in 2001. I won numerous awards for weed-eating and digging holes. We were watering with quick couplers and heads throughout the course. I could watch the operator of the Jacobsen F-10 skillfully grooming the course knowing there was a jug of water along, just in case it overheats. White golf balls were lost on the course and a metal

wood was an oxymoron. Tiger won the Masters that year and became the only player to win four consecutive major titles.

A few years later, John Hilton was able to install an automated system. It was a two-wire system that did what it was intended to do. No more moving sprinklers twice a day, but we still had a pump previously used by Henry Ford.

In 2015, Mr. John Hilton upgraded the system (previous parts were obsolete). We had a new (to us) pump purchased from the local fairgrounds.

At some point, I took over as super. Super what, is still to be determined.

Let's fast forward to October 2023. A new pumping station was in desperate need. John called Jay Glen with Watertronics and asked him to visit and offer a quote for a new station. Jay flew in and gave us the necessary information. A quote was given and later Jay was able to give us an exact cost.

I approached our Broadwater Trust Board. This is a board that awards matching grants for Broadwater County recreational organizations. I figured what the heck, the worst they could say is no. I filled out the grant application, attended their December

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Pump

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meeting, and was awarded a \$70,000 grant to help with the purchase. Old Baldy was responsible for the remaining \$30,000.

With a phone call to Jay — the pump was ordered before January 1, 2024. I guess after the first of the year parts, people and production are more expensive. In February, I received a phone call from Jay — the pump was scheduled for delivery May 9, 2024.

A call was made to Northwest Energy to make sure the necessary power was provided at the golf course. All good!!

As May 9 got closer, I made arrangements. I needed a new concrete pad, permission from the irrigation district to build, an electrician, and an installer. On May 2 my crew pulled the old pump, getting ready to pour concrete. The local high school teacher and his class were able to form and pour concrete. We were all set to pour, but Mother Nature said not today. With a day delayed on pad,

concrete was poured and given some time to cure.

Jay called and gave me the number for the delivery dispatch. I called dispatch and the truck was scheduled for May 9 at 9:00 a.m. Some of you may recall that Bozeman Hill was shut down for nearly 20 hours due to winter driving conditions on May 8. No way the delivery would be on time. I called the individual who was going to unload the 53' truck (loaded with two pallets) that couldn't get into the golf course driveway, and he was ready to go. The driver arrived on time (miracle) and the truck was unloaded on the road next to the golf course. Pump and parts were then transported to the work shed. When you watch 1500 pounds and \$100,000 lifted off the truck and it starts to wobble on the skid steer, your heart pounds. This old man already has heart problems... just set it on the ground!!!

I was planning to get the new pump installed that week and have Jay train us and get water going ASAP. Once again, Mother Nature said NOPE. Snow, rain and wind caused some disturbance in my plan.

A few days later, Jay called and wanted to inspect the goods. All good, except, "You don't have all the parts." Jay got the missing parts on the way. "It could be a few days," he told me. Remember, the old pump was taken out on May 2. The pump was delivered May 9. The weather and difficulty scheduling workers delayed the installation. We now had gone two weeks without water. Cool temperatures and some rain had kept us green. But we did have a well so that we can water greens when needed. AND WE NEEDED.

The missing parts to complete the puzzle were delivered Friday, May 24, now 22 days without water. With a three-day weekend ahead, there was no chance of installation. Meanwhile, the electrician was waiting, the installer was waiting, I was waiting, and my members were wondering when I would get fired. But wait, once again, cool weather and moisture kept us green.

On May 24 when everything for the new pump arrived, the installer came out to the course and double checked parts and location. "We'll be there Tuesday, Wednesday for sure."

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We got about halfway installed on Wednesday. Did I mention that the slab was 2" too high so it was time to fabricate? The last time I cut metal and welded was in 1979 in a high school class. A hack saw and JB weld were not going to work this time.

Temperatures were getting warmer and the winds were continuing to blow. The course was slowly turning a dull yellow, not quite brown. Friday, May 31, 2:47 p.m., I received a call, "We're on our way to finish the install." Earlier that day I had already talked to my board about advertising for my position. At 6:30 p.m., the pump was plumbed and ready to go. WAIT... It does not have power. A desperate phone call to the electrician explaining we are installed and ready for him. His response, "I have to be out of town by 8:00 a.m. tomorrow, what time do you open?" I replied, "I'll be here all night if needed." He was there at 7:00 a.m.

The new pump was plumbed and wired. We were ready and Jay was in Billings (probably wishing he had never sold us the pump). I called Jay, Saturday at 7:30 a.m. (texted the night before) and he said, "See you around 12:30 p.m."

We had a tournament on this day. I texted the tournament organizers and told them to expect water. We are training today, NO EXCEPTIONS!!! No tournament participants were watered or injured during our training.



Remember that first home-run? The first made basket? The first hole in one or the first deer/elk harvested? That's how I felt when the pump purred and the sprinkler sprayed water. Prayers answered.

A footnote to this article. All the men who helped with the process (electrician, Northwest

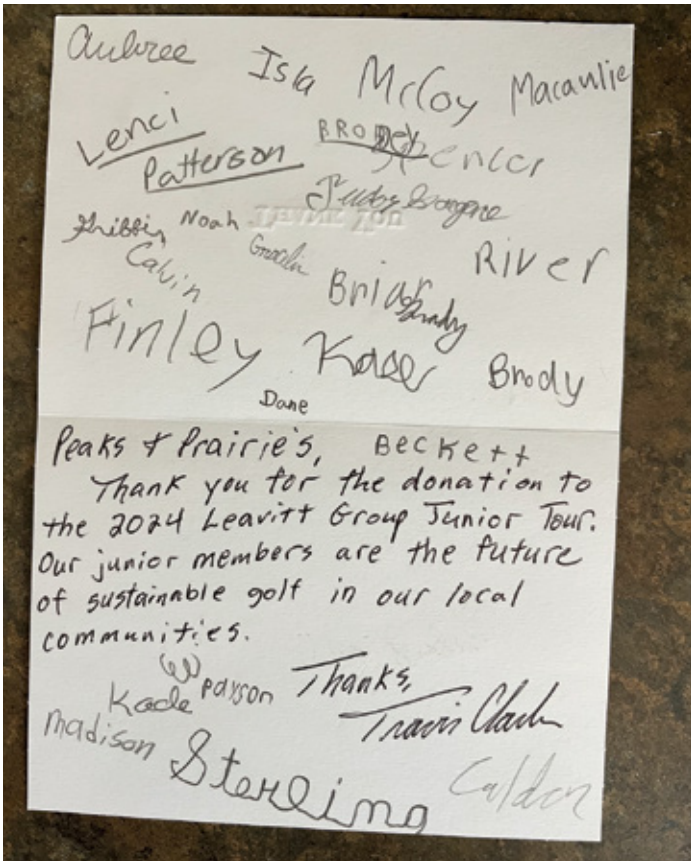
Energy, unloader of semi and installer) were students of mine when I was teaching. Now, they are all successful young men telling me what to do. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Prior to the installation of the new pump station, we would have to drive to turn on the control panel, turn on the pump, and occasionally prime the pump (bucket and funnel). Tonight, I can drive out to the golf course, stay in my car, watch the water start, shut the gate, and thank everyone involved — especially Jay Glen.

The sound of the new pump running... is the Sound of Music.

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A Team of Teams

Craig Ross, Interim Superintendent
Green Meadow Country Club, Helena, Mont.



As the crew piles into the shop in the morning, they read a motivational quote on the white board as I discuss the changes coming to our department this summer. “The way we work together determines the way we succeed, and as a team, you can hope to achieve something beyond yourself.” As we all know, it’s not just a single team, but multiple teams that we’ve built throughout our lives — teams of family and friends, and often-times the team we spend the most time together with, our work team. All have been amazing as I was presented with the challenges of being the interim superintendent for the summer.

For those of you who I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting yet, my name is Craig Ross. For the past 13 years I have been the assistant superintendent at Green Meadow Country Club. Over those 13 years there have been numerous chal-

lenges from first year jitters of a new assistant to learning what it took to help manage a golf course at a semi-private level. My parents, Skip and Sheila, and my amazing 12-year-old son, Dezmond, are the backbone of my family team. I have always had golf in my life; my father, who is a Montana State Hall of Fame golf coach who coached for over 30 years, was also my coach for the first ever boys state championship in Fort Benton school history in 2000. He has focused my passion for this game on so many levels from a player to the passion of trying to create the most enjoyable golf experience possible. He has continued to inspire me through his battle with multiple cancers over the past few years and I wouldn’t be close to where I am mentally without his support and encouragement.

Over the past several years, our club

has had trouble finding a long-term

solution for our general manager position, with the most recent hire lasting only a few months. This prompted our board of directors to opt for continuity in the remaining summer months with our current superintendent, Derek Hofer, taking over the responsibilities of the absent general manager position, and in turn, allowing me the opportunity to be the interim superintendent.

The summer so far has not been short of its challenges from chasing green speeds, to timing of spray and fertilizer applications, to enduring the extreme heat of the summer. The numerous responsibilities of the superintendent can create a

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Teams continued from page 13

weight that seems at times as much as an entire membership. Initially, we were able to keep up with the normal demands of the course as new team members began to learn their responsibilities and expectations. As the demands of the summer increased, I definitely felt the strain of going from a department with a superintendent with two assistants to a superintendent with just one assistant. Having one less team member with the ability to spray, fertilize, and identify and fix irrigation inadequacies presented some challenges, but also gave us the opportunity to identify some of our team members who wanted an increase in responsibility and ended up learning a lot about irrigation. Others turned out to be good leaders for projects around the course.

As the summer progressed towards our Member Guest Tournament, temperatures started to rise to the upper 90s and low 100s for what seemed like months! During this time, other members of our team — including Alex Browne (our second assistant serving as the interim assistant superintendent) — who did an amazing job dragging hoses and satellite sprinklers around the course to keep our playing surfaces from burning alive! Through this heat having such easy access to a mentor of the caliber of Derek was priceless helping us stay on top of maintaining the standards that the members of this club have come to expect every year.

I couldn't say all this without mentioning another team, the



Peaks & Prairies team, that has helped me grow as an individual and a professional within this industry. This team of individuals has been a huge addition not just educationally, but also for the mental support through the various stages of my career in the golf industry, and will stick with me forever.

The entire crew has been nothing short of amazing through this summer. The comradery definitely stands out with this crew with multiple guys talking about coming back next year before they are even close to leaving for the summer. This crew and this summer will absolutely be something that I will never forget and hope we can keep a lot of these guys for multiple seasons. All the worries and anxious moments of doubt can seem overwhelming, but have all been so much more enjoyable with these amazing teams in my life.



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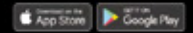
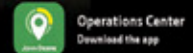
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Club Car

The advertisement features a photograph of two Club Car utility vehicles on a golf course. One is a green and white utility vehicle with a cargo bed, and the other is a smaller green and white utility vehicle. A person is standing near the larger vehicle, and another is driving the smaller one. The background shows a lush green golf course with tall trees under a clear sky.

Thank you to Todd Lupkes CGCS, and Old Works for hosting the Montana Scholarship/Education Golf Event!

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Fall Meeting continued from page 1

digital image analysis. He also authored “Turf Analyzer” software that is used by turfgrass scientists to assess turfgrass research. Karcher’s research background is in turfgrass soil management and cultural practices with an aim to improve turf quality while minimizing environmental impacts.

Becky Bowling, Ph.D., (right) is uniquely qualified. Not only is she an extension specialist at the University of Tennessee, she also understands how applicable and practical her teachings are on your level, as her husband has been a golf course superintendent. Bowling’s research program focuses on environmental turfgrass science and resource management with an emphasis on water quality protection and water-use efficiency. She has also helped promote professional development and environmental stewardship through initiatives like the Certified Professional Turfgrass Management program, Water Efficient Recognized Green Professionals, and the GCSAA BMP effort.



Tim Hiers (left) has been a golf course manager since 1976. His accomplishments include assisting Collier’s Reserve Country Club in becoming the first Audubon International Cooperative Signature Sanctuary Golf Course. He is a past recipient of both the GCSAA Excellence in Government Relations Award and the USGA Green Section Award. Since 2018, he has been the Director of

Golf Course Operations at The Dye Course at White Oak Conservation, Yulee, Florida. The Dye Course at White Oak is a private, ecologically managed golf course that is part of a world-class retreat experience and was Pete Dye’s last design. In 2022, Golf Digest awarded it as the Best New Private Course winner.

Lee Strutt, MG, CGCS, MS, PgDip, (top right) is an experienced golf superintendent (27 years) and loves the challenge of

both construction/grow-in and operational maintenance in UK, Europe and Canada. He is a mentor for the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) and an experienced inspector and examiner for the Master Greenkeeper Certificate. Strutt believes in sharing ideas, experiences and debates that help to make this amazing industry even better. He enjoys tournament support and has volunteered at three Ryder Cups, the Scottish Open and two US Opens. He is a regular presenter on the British Turf Management Exhibition, and has presented in Australia, Asia and at the GCSAA Conference & Trade Show. When our conference registration opened, Strutt was the Director of Agronomy, Cabot Cape Breton, Inverness, Nova Scotia. He has since changed positions and is now the new Director of Golf Course & Estate at Loch Lomond Golf Club, Scotland.



Let’s play golf on October 30 held in conjunction with the event. Superintendent Bob Popp and his team, who are familiar faces at our events —recognizing the power of continuing education, will host golf at the Laurel Golf Club. The property has enjoyed several updates since our last visit, most notably and new maintenance facility and a new club facility. As always, hole sponsors are available and appreciated.

The Value of Our Trade Show includes building relationships, as well as being an excellent source for information. We are told annually that we have the magic potion for timing and length, and even attendance.

On October 29, in addition to stopping by your favorite vendor’s booth, enjoy this opportunity to communicate with our allied partners who you don’t know. This is a great chance to ask questions of our allied members before you grab your stamp. While it is fun to connect with the people you know — and talk to those you conduct business with — we encourage you to take advantage of all the knowledge in the room. It will bring an added value to your experience.

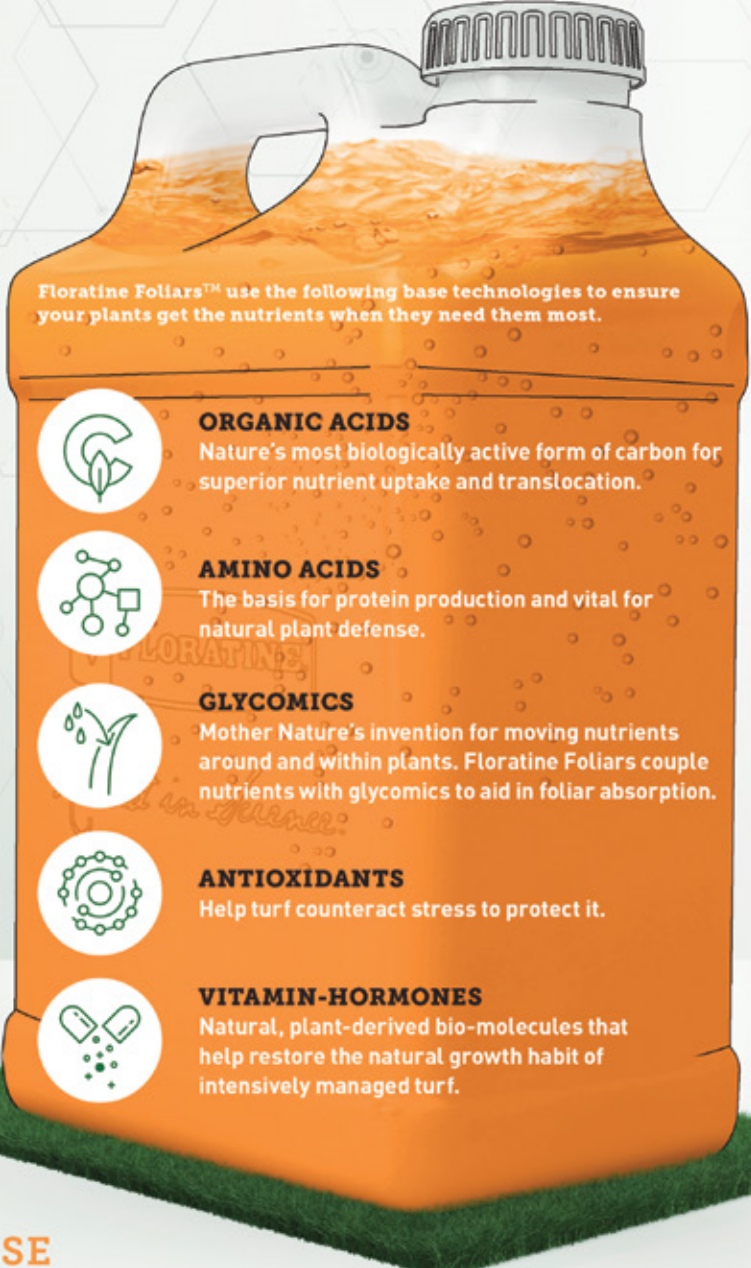
The Trade Show is important. It has a large impact on our budget and it is there to bring all entities together for the purpose of better turf! Take advantage of the opportunity! It will be a win-win for all.

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