



The Green Sheet

Central Pennsylvania Golf Course Superintendents Association

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July 2021

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All 50 state manuals are the tool to get you started, and GCSAA helps you get going on your facility BMP manual with step-by-step videos on how to edit or modify them for your facility.

Golf Course best management practices (BMPs) offer guidelines for superintendents to manage their facilities in an efficient and environmentally sustainable manner. BMP manuals document all of the science-based practices and professional course management that many people need to see. While superintendents spearhead BMP efforts, the use of BMPs benefit everyone in the community that a golf course serves.

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Sample environmental objectives

[Heritage Hills Golf Course sample environmental objectives](#)

[Stowe Mountain Golf Club sample environmental charter](#)

[Stone Creek Golf Club sample environmental objectives](#)

[Vermont business environmental partner policy statement](#)

Sample policies and principles

[Alpine Country Club sample policy statement](#)

[Heritage Hills Golf Course sample policy statement](#)

[Mirimichi Golf Course sample environmental policy statement](#)

[Rockland Country Club sample policy statement](#)

Interested in sharing what works at your facility? Contact [Emily Fuger](#), manager, environmental programs, at 800-472-7878, ext. 5163.

President's Message

Agronomic Prognostication

As I watch the British Open it reminds me I always use that event to gauge how the summer is going and how far we are from seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. During the 2010 Open I realized how screwed I really was. In 2016, summer never really got started but in 2017 it lasted well into October. I'm convinced though if you can make it to the British Open in good shape you only have 30 days to hang onto August 15th. Then the days are shorter, night time temps start falling off, getting us out of Pythium pressure. We all start slamming seed and aerifiers in the ground and all the self inflicted damage can start.

Ever find yourself playing this mind game on the course? I guess that's the spice of life. We have no idea what we are in for from year to year. If the last two years have taught us anything, the ability to adapt is invaluable. Luck is a big factor too. Looking at the radar sometimes is like watching a movie play out where some of your buddies get no rain and some get hammered. With rain. Enjoy the rest of the summer. The forecast doesn't look too bad till late August.

See you in September.

Pete Ramsey,
Central Penn President

Poa annua 'remembers' being mowed

Poa annua plants pass along an awareness of mowing stress to offspring. Learn more about the discovery, the research that inadvertently brought it to light, and what it means for Poa breeding.

July 2021 | Andrew Hartsock

There might not be a more polarizing golf course turfgrass than *Poa annua*, and researchers at Penn State University recently added a bit of lore to the love-it-or-hate-it (and sometimes both) nature of the global grass species commonly called annual bluegrass: It remembers — across generations.

“That should freak people out a little bit,” Penn State doctoral candidate Chris Benson says with a laugh. “Every day, it gets more and more advanced.”

No, *Poa* hasn't become sapient, but researchers at Penn State recently found it has the ability to pass along to its progeny whether it has been mowed or not — potentially solving a riddle that had vexed David Huff, Ph.D., professor of turfgrass breeding and genetics, for decades.

Huff joined the Penn State faculty in 1994 “looking for a research project the industry would support,” he says. He considered Kentucky bluegrass fairways and fine fescue roughs, but “no one was interested in those.” Huff thought back to his grad school days at University of California, Davis, and recalled an idea he had about *Poa annua* putting greens.

“The problem in California ... they're not necessarily against having *Poa annua* as a putting surface,” Huff says. “It's that it's such a mixture of genotypes with differential growth rates. You end up with a bumpy surface at the end of the day. As a breeder, I thought, ‘That's easy to solve. Just breed a uniform strain.’”

What he was suggesting was, in a way, heresy. At Penn State, the unofficial Home of Creeping Bentgrass, young Huff was proposing to pursue the weed that, many believed, could be the ruin of those bentgrass greens. About the time late Penn State colleague Tom Watschke, Ph.D., was studying herbicides to eradicate *Poa*, Huff hoped to popularize it. He garnered the support of his colleagues, guidance from storied superintendent Mark Kuhns, CGCS — GCSAA's 2009 president and 2020 winner of the association's Col. John Morley Distinguished Service Award — and funding from the USGA. Eventually, Huff developed nearly a dozen elite dwarf strains that showed commercial potential.

“I had some really beautiful lines,” Huff says. “We were growing them all over the place, and it was



Preparations for an experiment on a Poa annua green at Penn State's Valentine Turfgrass Research Center. Photo by Pete Landschoot

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looking really good. We had disease resistance; they were heat-tolerant with high shoot density.”

As Huff transitioned to seed increase — the process of turning a small amount of seed into progressively larger amounts — he noticed something. “When we weren’t mowing, just collecting the seed, I looked at the plants, and they weren’t dwarf anymore,” he recalls. “They weren’t the high-quality greens-type we had bred. They were wild-type *Poa annua*. That was really disappointing at the time.”

Editor’s note: Read everything GCM has published recently on Poa annua.



A variety of greens-type Poa annua before (left) and after three years of seed production increase. Photo by David Huff

At first, Huff thought wild *Poa* from a nearby field was sullyng his elite strains. The team used herbicides and grew the *Poa* in plastic. They fumigated. And fumed. No matter what the team did, Huff’s elite strains would always revert to the wild weed at the heart of its genetic makeup.

“I mothballed the whole seed-breeding program,” Huff says. “Put it in a closet.”

The project was out of sight, but not out of mind. Huff put a succession of three graduate students, including Benson, on the mystery, and their research pointed to epigenetics — the study of how genes can work differently based on environment or behaviors, without changes to the underlying DNA. Epigenetic changes, unlike genetic changes, can be environmentally reversible.

The team found evidence, published recently in *Crop Science*, that the act of mowing *Poa annua* increases global DNA methylation — that is, the addition of methyl groups to DNA that can change a DNA segment’s activity without changing its sequence — and can pass the environmental effects of mowing to *Poa*’s unmowed offspring. That’s the remembering part. When mowing stress was removed during seed increase, the *Poa* blew off the methyl caps, and “forgot” the stress of mowing.

While the research showed a global increase in DNA methylation, Huff & Co. don’t know which specific genes are capped. That would require a resource-heavy genomic sequence. But Huff is confident that now that he and his researchers have solved the mystery of his elite *Poa*’s proclivity to forget, they can successfully overcome it.

“I thought, ‘Hallelujah. Now I know what to do with *Poa annua* seed production,’” he says. “I unmothballed (the previous projects) and set out a trial in 2019 with 44 entries. We developed a novel seed-harvesting technique that allows us to harvest the seed of greens-type *Poa annua* without letting it revert to wild-type. It’s basically a redo of the breeding program — and we have some beautiful *Poas*.”

Andrew Hartsock is GCM’s managing editor.
<https://www.gcmonline.com/course/turf/news/poa-annua-remembers-mowing>

Membership News

The following individuals have applied for membership into our association. If there are no written objections within the next seven days, they will be accepted into CPGCSA at the next meeting.

Collin Berger Class C
 Assistant Superintendent, Lancaster Country Club

Alex Wager Class AF
 Marketing Specialist, Lebanon Turf

If you know of anyone who is interested in membership into the association, please have them contact Wanda at 717-279-0368 or cpgcsa@hotmail.com.

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Membership information is also available on the Central Penn website at: www.cpgcsa.org

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How to Hang on to Your Golf Course's Best Employees

With demand for workers high and supply low, your top talent is more likely to depart for potentially greener pastures. Try these strategies to retain your team's stars.

December 2019 | Phillip M. Perry

It's a nightmare scenario for any business: A star employee suddenly decides to jump ship for the competition. Out the door go years of experience, in-depth knowledge and, in some cases, even a good number of hard-won customer connections.

It's that last part, with its costly ramifications, that can cause the most immediate damage. "Customers will often follow a departing employee out the door to his or her new employer," says Richard Avdoian, an employee development consultant with the Midwest Business Institute in St. Louis. "People like to stay with employees they trust."

Longer range, the ghosting of a top-performing employee derails any plans of grooming that person for a management role. "When you lose your best employees, you lose not only their skills, but also their leadership potential," says David Dye, president of Let's Grow Leaders, a management consulting firm in Washington, D.C.

A tight labor market

Expect more star employees to seek greener pastures in the months ahead, and fewer quality replacement prospects. With the nation's unemployment rate under 4%, most economists think the labor market has reached a condition of full employment. As top-quality talent grows scarce, other employers in your region will try harder than ever to lure away your best people.



Poach prevention: Pave a path to growth within the company for your high-performing employees to keep them feeling challenged and engaged. This needn't necessarily involve promotion to a managerial role — opportunities for continuing education or to learn new skills can be incentives too.

Photos by Montana Pritchard

"When demand for personnel is high and supply is low, people have more choices for where to work," says Dye. "Employers have greater difficulty retaining the best performers, and the value rises for those individuals' work skills." In rural areas especially, where employers reside far from large cities with concentrated pools of talent, quality employees come at a premium.

How about your golf course? Do you think your top performers will hesitate to jump ship? Maybe so, but the fact remains that people who perform the best in the workplace tend to suffer the most from wandering eyes. A [2014 survey by SAP and Oxford Economics](#) that was published in the *Harvard Business Review* found that less than half of high performers were satisfied with their current duties. One in five was likely to seek a new opportunity in the next six months. "Top performers are often less than content with their jobs," says Avdoian. "Many want to further their careers by moving on to more promising positions."

Spot your star employees

So how do you keep your own best people from jumping ship? The first step is to make sure you focus on the brightest stars. Avdoian suggests looking at your employment pool as a complex of three classes of workers on an escalating scale of value: slackers, foundationals and high achievers.

Slackers are easy to spot: They do the bare minimum to collect their paychecks. Foundational employees, in contrast, perform their duties in a conscientious and dependable manner, serving as reliable anchors for your business. The final category consists of people who outperform the norm. "High achievers are driven go-getters," Avdoian says. "They are your most productive employees." These individuals can deliver up to 400% more productivity to a workplace than other employees, according to the *Harvard Business Review* report.

Make sure you give your best people the specific things they need to keep them on board. And just what do they want more than anything else? The answer is probably not surprising: The *Harvard Business Review* report found that top performers care significantly more than average or low-performing ones about competitive compensation. You must offer them a salary commensurate with their skills and at least equal to what other employers in your region provide.

Pay for performance

High achievers also care more than their slacker or foundational counterparts about the ability to earn bonus pay based on performance. "The opportunity to make more money through their achievements is an incentive for your top performers to stick

around,” says Donna Cutting, CEO of Red Carpet Learning Systems in Asheville, N.C. The goal is to create a win-win situation for employer and worker — fixed compensation costs remain low, while employees have the opportunity to earn more when they excel.

A pay-for-performance system is a far cry from familiar reward-system relics of the past, such as the annual seniority-based salary hike and the automatic year-end bonus. The problem is that those conventional methods don't get the job done, as they don't incentivize better performance. Moreover, high performers resent the fact that they are not rewarded for their superior productivity at a rate any higher than others are. Meanwhile, ongoing salary increases bloat payrolls until a business risks becoming uncompetitive.

Besides its direct financial component, performance-based pay also serves to highlight the connection between employee actions and organizational success. “It's important that people understand their overall part in the success of a business,” Cutting says. “Performance-based pay does that.”

Valuable as it is as a retention tool, performance-based pay does carry the hazard of unwittingly rewarding the wrong behavior. “You need to be careful that the performance objectives you set are in alignment with your business values,” says Cutting. She points to the example of Wells Fargo — a bank that rewarded its employees for burdening customers with unwanted accounts — as a textbook illustration of a performance-based pay scheme gone bad. “You have to make sure the objectives you set are not just based on sales or revenue, but also on the way customers and colleagues are treated.”

For example, the salesperson who is making a great number of sales may also have a rushed, impatient manner that irritates your customers. Gear your bonus plan to reward employees for quality service. Consider using a mailed or online survey to assess customer satisfaction.

On the other side of that coin, performance-based pay won't work if employees are unclear about how their actions directly contribute to the organization's bottom line, or if they lack adequate know-how to perform to their maximum potential. “You need to make sure employees have a sufficient measure of control over meeting the described objectives,” says Cutting. “And they must be given the proper tools to do so.”

Include everyone in performance-based pay

One more peril of performance-based pay: Employees left out of the program may resent their inability to earn bonus compensation. That's why it's important to include everyone, even those in positions that don't as obviously lend themselves to quantifiable results.

“For people who are solely responsible for their work, and where their activities can be readily quantified, pay-for-performance plans are more straightforward,” says Dye. That's why many organizations begin by measuring easily measurable achievements, such as higher revenues by salespeople, accident reductions by security personnel, and glowing customer reports for service representatives.

Designing an effective program for members of your staff who do not perform in quantifiable ways is far more difficult, but it's not impossible. “You can make pay-for-performance work for receptionists, housekeepers or any kind of support staff as long as they are given the necessary tools by management,” Cutting says.

How can “support” staff performance be measured in a way that is fair and reasonable? One approach is to ask, “What is this person's job and how well are they doing it?” Perhaps a receptionist answers the phone before three rings or greets customers in a cheerful and professional way. If you ask employees how they measure their own performance, you may get some good ideas that can be translated into a quantifiable system.

Foster a healthy work environment

Vital as it is, performance pay is not the only tool for retaining top employees, and it may not even be an option in some situations. Also helpful is cultivating a respectful and supportive work environment. “It's important that people understand what the business wants and that they feel valued when they meet the employer's expectations,” Cutting says. “The ability to contribute and to feel involved with the success of the organization can be its own motivation.”

Here are some additional factors that can help keep your best people aboard:

- **Autonomy.** “High performers do not like to be micromanaged,” says Christina Eanes, a workforce management consultant in Alexandria, Va. “They want the freedom to do their job in a creative way, along with the requisite responsi-



Performance-based pay paired with clear performance-measurement metrics can help you hang on to those high-quality employees you can't afford to lose.

bility and authority.” And that serves an organization well: “Innovation happens when smart people find new and better ways to get their jobs done,” Eanes says.

- **Frequent feedback.** Top performers want to know where they stand, and they want feedback more than once a year. A negative December surprise — especially if it affects bonus pay — may well send them packing. The *Harvard Business Review* report highlights the importance of monthly performance reviews.
- **Advancement pathways.** Top performers expect the employer to help them advance in their fields. “You need to create a culture where people want to work with you because of what they are going to learn, and have a real clear-cut career ladder so they see how they can move up,” says Cutting.

Sometimes, clearing a path for advancement is easier said than done. In a perfect world, a business would have enough open management positions to accommodate every deserving person. Reality is often much different. What can you do? “You need to create a growth path for top-performing people that keeps them feeling challenged even though they are not advanced into management positions,” says Dye.

One solution is to feed top performers’ craving for new skills. “High achievers have an insatiable need for self-development,” says Eanes. “They have an ingrained need to develop themselves, so the more opportunities you can provide them to learn, the more loyal they will be.”

Those opportunities can be offered by thinking laterally. “Not every top performer expects that advancement means a higher-level position,” says Eanes. “Millennials, especially, often prefer to move laterally because it provides them with more learning opportunities and more challenges.” A high-performing individual in sales, for example, might welcome a move to an adjacent position in human resources with the opportunity to learn a new set of marketable skills.

Tailor to the individual

Because not all top performers have the same motivations, you need to consult with each of them to better understand specific needs. Eanes suggests designing what she calls an “individual development plan” with each person. “Determine the next logical level of knowledge and expertise and what you can do to help them achieve it,” Eanes says.

An individual development plan might include a pathway to advancement or the acquisition of new skills. One individual might take on responsibility for larger projects. A second might share their knowledge by training other people. A third might cross-train in areas outside of their core competence. Think of these as “expertise promotions.”

These work environment modifications combined with a robust pay-for-performance plan should go a long way toward keeping your best people from jumping ship. Monitor how well you’re doing by asking your staff for feedback, and observe how employees perform. Are they acting in more motivated ways and paying closer attention to things that are really important?

Creating a program to retain your top people takes time and effort. The payoff, though, can be considerable. “Businesses which fail to retain their best people will be stuck with a majority of their employees being slackers and overtaxing the foundational employees whom they rely on for productivity,” says Avdoian. “And that will lead to a decline in employee morale, which will in turn impact productivity and devastate profitability.”

Phillip M. Perry is an award-winning business management writer based in New York City whose work has been syndicated in publications nationwide, including GCM.

<https://www.gcmonline.com/profession/operations/news/retain-best-employees>

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June CPGCSA Meeting at Lebanon Country Club

Thanks to Dan Brickley and his staff at Lebanon Country Club for hosting our meeting on June 9th. The course was awesome, the weather was amazing, and we had a great turnout!

1st Place
Chris Martin
Jason Przystup
Jeff Green
Matt Hoffman

2nd Place
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Tim Riismandel
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Closest to the Pin #3 - Jeff Green

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Getting A Handle on Thatchy Fairways

July 16, 2021

John Daniels, Agronomist, Northeast Region



An excessive layer of fairway thatch like the one in this image can be improved with vertical mowing.

Too much thatch can cause a myriad of agronomic and playability concerns on golf course fairways. During wet periods, the thatch can swell like a sponge and lead to turf scalping when mowing. This issue is unsightly and can cause significant turf stress that could easily result in further decline during the heat of summer. Golfers who enjoy some extra ball roll at the end of their drives often complain about soft fairways and assume that the course is being overwatered when in reality too much thatch could be the problem.

There are many different techniques that can be employed for correcting a fairway thatch issue. In my opinion, vertical mowing is the best way to get a handle on excess fairway thatch. PTO-driven implements like the [VC60](#), [SW04](#), [Verti-Cut 1600](#) and the [Triple V 375](#) are extremely effective machines for removing thatch and promoting more upright turf with less grain. Once thatch is pulled to the surface, it can be easily blown into windrows, swept up and discarded. Just be prepared for a lot of material if you haven't done this process in some time and your fairways are puffy. You might be surprised to see how much thatch you are able to pull out!

Core aeration is another effective technique for managing thatch. In addition to thatch management, it also provides additional agronomic benefits like reducing soil compaction. However, it wouldn't be my first choice if thatch is the primary problem. I favor vertical mowing to mitigate the thatch layer and coring to improve soil physical properties. Many highly regarded golf courses incorporate both techniques at some point during the year to maintain high-quality fairways.

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AUGUST 5, 2021





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GCSAA Conference and Trade Show coming in February



Known as the Golf Industry Show since 2005, the annual gathering has been rebranded to better reflect its GCSAA ties.

June 29, 2021 | GCM staff

GCSAA has announced that the world's largest golf course management event has been rebranded as the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. The new name will debut at the 2022 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show, Feb. 5-10 in San Diego.

Known as the Golf Industry Show since 2005, the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show will continue to offer a dynamic week of education, networking opportunities, and access to golf course and facility management solutions for golf industry professionals.

The event is produced by GCSAA along with presenting partners, the Golf Course Builders Association of America and the American Society of Golf Course Architects, and with participating partners, the United States Golf Association, National Golf Course Owners Association and National Golf Foundation.

"The GCSAA Conference and Trade Show rebranding is not about changes to the event but is based on the strength of the GCSAA brand," says GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans. "As GCSAA's brand recognition has grown over the years, it makes sense to have our premier event share in that. Along with our partners, we'll still feature opportunities for collaboration and team building among superintendents, architects, builders and more."

The GCSAA Conference rebranding is part of a strategic effort to bring all GCSAA entities under the association name, and it comes on the heels of the [rebranding of the association's philanthropic organization to the GCSAA Foundation](#) in May.

"As we move closer to our 100th anniversary in 2026, bringing all aspects of GCSAA's operations under the GCSAA name not only makes sound business sense, but also gives a clear tie to our long history," says Evans.

The 2022 GCSAA Conference will return to an in-person gathering; the 2021 event was held virtually because of the pandemic. The event will kick off with the GCSAA Golf Championships Feb. 5-7 in San Diego, which will include play at Torrey Pines, site of the 2021 U.S. Open.

The conference portion will begin with a welcome reception on Monday night. The bulk of educational offerings and the trade show will be condensed to Tuesday through Thursday to offer attendees the full event experience while requiring fewer days away from work and home. In addition, a virtual learning component will be offered following the in-person event for those who want to take additional education or who were unable to attend in person.

Registration for the 2022 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show will open Nov. 2, 2021. For more information, visit the [GCSAA Conference and Trade Show website](#).

<https://www.gcmonline.com/headlines/gcsaa-news/news/gcsaa-conference-trade-show>

The advertisement features a background image of a golf course. The main headline reads "Superior Strategic Stress Management" in a large, bold, serif font. Below this, it says "Ocean Organics, The Industry Leader" and "45 Years in the Golf Industry". Further down, it lists "Best Seaweed Processor — The Mother Ship" and "All products manufactured in Waldoboro, ME". Three product categories are highlighted in white boxes: "Superior Surfactants: Mariner®, Privateer®, Nautilus®, Windjammer®", "Superior Liquids: XP Extra Protection®, Stress Rx®, Guarantee®", and "Superior Granular Fertility: SeaBlend®". At the bottom, contact information is provided: "Call your distributor or contact Kevin Collins (914) 621-1151 • kevin@oceanorganics.com". The Ocean Organics logo is centered at the bottom, with the website "www.oceanorganics.com" and a small copyright notice: "Baltimore Country Club, Maryland • Photo: © L.C. Lambrecht, All Rights Reserved."

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GCSAA ASSOCIATION HEALTH PROGRAM

GCSAA has partnered with Association Health Programs (AHP), an insurance broker who specializes in unique and cost-effective association insurance solutions, to offer our members quality and customized health care options.

The creation of a program was based on members feedback. Now, as part of a large pool of national associations, all GCSAA members (excluding Friends) will have access to this program. In addition to health insurance, members have access to other related types of insurance, including dental and vision, disability, life, accident, long-term care, and Medicare supplements.

To begin the inquiry process

You will be required to complete the online census form to determine your eligibility. This form will provide AHP the necessary information to be able to advise you. AHP will only respond to GCSAA members.

Begin the inquiry »

If you have any issues, please call AHP at 888-450-3040, but only GCSAA members can inquire about available products.

<https://www.gcsaa.org/about-gcsaa/membership/membership-benefits/health-insurance>

Tim Higgins, Senior Hydrologist for David Miller and Associates, Inc. was the speaker for our June meeting. He spoke to our group about what to expect during the SRBC docket renewal process.

Please feel free to contact Tim if you have any questions about how his company can assist in preparing for the renewal process.

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MET Team Championship and Nor'easter Ski Day

October 12, 2021

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February 24, 2022

Killington Ski Resort in VT for the Nor'easter Ski Day



The Green Sheet

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