



# Louisiana Turfgrass Association

*Serving the turfgrass industry for over 50 years*

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## Louisiana Turfgrass Association Annual Meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup>

The Louisiana Turfgrass Association will have its annual conference on January 6, 2011. The featured speaker is Dr. Wayne Hanna, a world renowned turfgrass breeder from the University of Georgia.

Dr. Hanna received the Inventor's Award for solving numerous turfgrass industry problems. During his 32-year career as a plant breeder, he has developed winter-hardy, shade tolerant, pest-resistant bermudagrasses able to handle high traffic. These grasses now grow on golf courses around the world and in football stadiums for the Georgia Bulldogs, Tennessee Titans, Washington Redskins and others. Hanna has spearheaded the screening of bermudagrass for hybrids that naturally deter mole crickets, the No. 1 insect pest in the Southeast. He and his research team have been awarded seven patents. Hanna received the 2002 Technology Transfer Award for Outstanding Effort from the USDA's Agricultural Research Services and the Reed Funk Achievement Award from the National Turfgrass Breeders Association. Dr. Hanna will present the latest on new variety development and their fit for Louisiana.

The turfgrass managers responsible for the gorgeous field at Tiger Stadium, Eric Fasbender and Mike Watson, will talk about the tremendous turnaround for the field at the stadium and other inside information about managing the sports fields at LSU.

It was a challenging year for turfgrass managers in 2010 as bitter cold weather, excessive rainfall, and finally drought weakened turfgrass causing it to be very susceptible to damage by diseases and insects. Most everyone was affected in some way by tropical sod webworms, armyworms, and diseases like algae and take-all in 2010. Dr. Don Ferrin and Nick Singh will present information about combating diseases that plague turfgrass and Dr. Dennis Ring will discuss the mysteries of insect control. Dr. Roger Hinson, Economist for the LSU AgCenter, will give us his predictions for the green economy in 2011.

Many high school athletic fields were renovated in the state in 2010. There are many more fields in the state that needed to be renovated and some just needed to be abandoned. Jeff Kershaw has seen some of the most extreme situations in his career as a professional turfgrass manager. He will present "tricks of the trade" for managing sports turf with a focus on making high school athletic fields the best that they can be. A panel discussion concerning sport's field management will follow to address questions from maintaining to completely renovating high school sports fields.

The location of this year's meeting is the Lawton Room at Tiger Stadium on the LSU campus in Baton Rouge. Registration fee for the meeting is \$50.00. Pre-registration is recommended but on-site registration will be available from 8:00 to 9:00 am at no additional cost. Your registration for the meeting includes membership in the Louisiana Turfgrass Association. Since the LTA Annual meeting is a great learning opportunity, GCSAA will award education points for your attendance. Agenda and registration for the 2011 LTA Annual Conference are on pages 8 and 9 in this newsletter. We look forward to your attendance on January 6th.

## Should I use a winterizer fertilizer in St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass?

Are winterizers needed in home lawns? I get this question every year from consumers as well as lawn care professionals because winterizer fertilizers are so well-advertised at garden centers and big box stores. The truth is most winterizers sold are not really designed for southern turfgrass species such as St. Augustinegrass or centipedegrass but are perfect for Kentucky bluegrass or other northern “yankee” type grasses. The problem with these “winterizers” is their high nitrogen analysis. Winterizer fertilizers are essentially lawn fertilizers with more potassium and slightly less nitrogen than summer type fertilizers. Some manufacturers do not even reduce the amount of nitrogen. I did a recent survey of the lawn winterizers available in the Baton Rouge area. Not too surprising, about 90% of the winterizers sold had at least 20% nitrogen. The increased potassium can be very beneficial to the lawn because this nutrient reduces winter kill and diseases but the nitrogen is not and can be detrimental to the health of centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass when applied this time of the year.



### What's wrong with winterizers high in nitrogen?

Because St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass lawns are not actively growing, nitrogen fertilizer applications are not needed during the fall and winter. In fact, nitrogen fertilization should have ceased on these lawn species by late August. Nitrogen fertilizer applied in the fall or on dormant to semi-dormant St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass and zoysiagrass lawns can lead to increased brown patch incidences and winter kill. Additionally, nitrogen applications during this time have a greater potential for leaching or movement into non-target areas. As I stated earlier in the article, having an adequate amount of potassium has been linked to winter hardiness. These so called “winterizers” would probably be a better fit as a late summer last application of fertilizer. However, the lawn may not need any potassium at all. You won't know for sure unless you get a soil analysis.

Winter is an excellent time to collect soil samples and submit them for analysis. Soil samples submitted to parish LSU AgCenter office cost only \$10 but they provide a wealth of information concerning the pH and overall fertility of your soil including potassium, the winterizer nutrient.

## Algae Problems in Turf

Algae often develop on bare soil or exposed thatch of golf greens or other closely mowed or thin areas of turf that are overly wet. This results in the production of thin layers of green to black algal scum that become thick, cracked layers of algal crusts when they dry out. The algae found in turf are generally a mixture of single-celled and filamentous green algae and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that grow primarily during periods of warm, wet weather from late spring to early fall. Although these algae are not pathogenic and do not attack the turf directly, they can compete with the turf preventing it from growing by interfering with water and oxygen penetration into the soil. Cyanobacteria have also been implicated as the cause of a condition on closely mowed golf greens called yellow spot.

The management of algae in turf is based primarily on modifying the environment to make it less favorable for algal growth and to improve growing conditions for the turf. Since algae are often problems on shady, compacted, poorly drained sites with little air movement, an aggressive program to correct these problems is necessary. First and foremost, the frequency of irrigation should be reduced, but enough water should be applied each irrigation so that the root zone is thoroughly wetted. Topdressing with sand or diatomaceous earth will also help to dry out the algae and the surface layers. If shade and poor air movement are contributing to the problem, it may be necessary to prune or completely remove trees or shrubs from the surrounding area. Regular core aeration, spiking or verticutting will help to reduce compaction, improve drainage and break up the algal layer. If a thick algal crust has developed, it may be necessary to physically remove as much of it as possible by raking or brushing.

*Cont'd, pg. 6*

## “Field of Excellence” Program a Big Success for Several High School Football Fields

The LSU AgCenter completed its first year working with high schools in the state with the Field of Excellence program. LSU AgCenter experts (parish agents and state specialists) working with the Field of Excellence program provided periodic visits to assess and make recommendations at participating high schools throughout the growing season. The goal of the program was to improve the overall agronomic conditions (fertility, weed management, etc.), as well as promote practices to reduce dangerous soil compaction that can potentially contribute to serious head and spinal injuries.

Following the AgCenter recommendations dramatically improved the aesthetic appearance of the fields and allowed them to recover from excessive use. The program began in late winter and ended after the final home game. There were six schools across the state that participated in the program. Prior to the first home game, the schools received a large banner and sign to display near the field signifying that the school was an “LSU AgCenter Field of Excellence”. However, the best part of the program was the dramatic change that occurred in the overall appearance and the safety and playability of the football field. The Field of Excellence program was a big success because of the commitment from the schools to improve their fields and involvement of our parish agents.

Thank you for all your hard work!



Vermilion Catholic in Abbeville, La. pictured above participated in “LSU AgCenter Field of Excellence” program.

### Parish agents and high schools participating in the Field of Excellence Program in 2010

Parish Agent	Parish	School(s)
Miles Brashier	Pointe Coupee	Catholic Point Coupee
Glen Daniels	Concordia	Ferriday
Keith Fontenot	Evangeline	Ville Platte
Richard Letlow	Morehouse	Bastrop
Stuart Gauthier	Vermillion	Abbeville, Vermillion Catholic

### What questions am I getting from the field?...

My bermudagrass has a leopard-like pattern!! –

*Injury from a light frost*

How can I keep *Poa* off my non-over-seeded golf green?

*Kerb Herbicide (pronamide) applied now.*

What is the most cost effective control for *Poa*, white clover, and sticker weeds for fairways and football fields

*Simazine in fall followed by atrazine in February*

Should I put a winterizer fertilizer on my lawn

*See article in this issue*

Can I put down sod during the winter?

*Yes, you can do it but don't let it dry out. Naturally, I prefer spring.*

## Green Industry Economics

### Weak Economy and New Normal

This article presents my personal opinions and conclusions. In no way are these official policies or statements of the LSU Agricultural Center.

Two recent events of major importance were elections and an announcement by the Federal Reserve Bank (Fed) that it would undertake more 'quantitative easing' (QE).

Politically, the Republican party had a party on November 2. This appears to be a strong shift toward conservative policy. Maybe so. However, the demographics of those who voted was very different from 2 years ago, and the turnout was about 1/3 lower. The next election could change the direction again, because there are few indications that economic growth will be anything but slow. That's the driver, in my opinion. Now, the Republican party has control of the House of Representatives, and is perceived to be in position to change policy. We all know that changing national policy is not easy, and control of the Federal government is divided. Its not clear what conservative policies will be adopted, if any, in the next 2 years. For now, we should expect little or no fiscal stimulus, a slow growing economy, and little job creation, while we wait for the next election.

### Consumption and investment

Here's information about QE. The Fed's official objectives are to promote a high level of employment and low, stable inflation, and chair Bernanke stated that these have not been met. Therefore it plans to purchase up to \$600 billion of government bonds through June 2011. As the nation's central bank, the Fed can create the money to make these purchases. This is supposed to loosen the supply of credit and encourage more economic activity. Some analysts think the amount is too modest and will not provide much stimulus. Others think it might sow the seeds of future inflation. As we know, long-term rates already are sharply lower over the past 3 years. Lending isn't happening because consumers and businesses are unable or unwilling to take on more debt, and businesses that want to move forward on projects find

that many banks are reluctant to take the risk that lending implies. Bank lending has dropped in five of the past six quarters, and consumer debt continues to decline slowly. As for economic growth, the government reported that the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual rate of 2 percent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2010, up from a rate of 1.7 percent in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is weak growth.

### Jobs

The number of people seeking jobless benefits was down about 2,000 weekly based on the 4-week average. Claims moved lower last year, from about 600,000 in June 09 to about 470,000 in December 09, and has been essentially flat since. The Labor Department's survey of employers showed a net gain of 151,000 jobs in October, the first increase since May. This was good, stronger than expected, but recall that sustained growth of 200,000 or more monthly is needed to bring down the unemployment rate, and this was the first increase that approached that magnitude. We'll watch for more jobs numbers of this magnitude.

### Housing

Housing – sales and construction - is normally a driver of job growth. The National Association of Home Builders forecasts builders to put up 605,000 houses and apartments in 2010, down 70% or so from 2.1 million in 2005. Median house prices have dropped 20 percent in that period. From the low point in the past year or so, there has been some slow, weak improvement. At this rate, it will be some time before households feel wealthier due to the value of homes. Commercial construction is down. Commercial vacancies are high in major markets, indicating the overbuilt position in that area.

The hope is that the QE move will help by lowering interest rates.

### Consumer confidence

Confidence is low and families and individuals are afraid or unable to spend. They still are paying off credit cards and/or many are walking away from mortgage debt. People are pessimistic. They



hear about joblessness, upside down mortgages, foreclosures, record levels of deficit in the U. S. budget, large debt as a share of GDP, austerity measures, and are not happy. On the other hand, auto sales are a brighter spot in the economy.

### **Louisiana's picture**

Louisiana did not experience a home price bubble so there has been no large decline. The state does continue to experience impacts from factors that include the oil spill, the drilling moratorium, and a weak economy, leading to a declining state budget. A bright spot is that the state's sales tax receipts have been reasonably steady and even a little higher in September and October, 2010 compared to a year ago. There are problems in the expected loss of stimulus monies after this fiscal year, and the discovery of a shortfall in the previous year's budget has added to the problem. These led to serious cuts. This news has an impact on consumer confidence and spending. The impacts of budget cuts land hardest on higher education and health and hospitals. But no matter where cuts are made, there are impacts. A reduced state budget may reduce employment directly. Secondary effects will be felt as purchases of supplies and operating costs are not made from the business community. There has been no effort to enhance revenues through taxes. Using a more local example (East Baton Rouge parish) as an example, state budget cuts to LSU mean that vacancies will not be filled, and fewer expenditures on supplies. Reports indicate that parish sales taxes are lower year over year by 4% or so, suggesting lower retail activity. A recent report showed that home sales are down 25% in the parish. Expect home prices to be pushed down, or sales to decline further. Declining property values will influence consumer's decisions about other purchases.

This parish and university example would apply in many other Louisiana cities that have universities or state health care facilities. It is clear that there are implications for the business community. For the turf industry, these and other factors probably have already contributed to a reduction in local demand for industry products. Even as business conditions

improve, it is possible that recovery in consumer expenditure areas that are non-essentials will not recover quite as quickly. Recall too that Louisiana's economy has tended to go into economic slow-downs later than other areas, and to recover later.

In the second LTA newsletter of this year, I brought up the discussion of whether there might be a 'new normal' in consumer behavior and expenditure in this post-crash era. New normal means a substantially different, and in this case lower, level and kind of consumption. That seems to be happening. Examples include choosing store brands rather than nationally promoted brands. This happens in the grocery store and in the shopping mall. Many consumers don't see credit cards and cash as equivalent any more, and are cutting back on credit use as noted above. That means that many consumers are waiting and saving before making the purchase. Reports indicate that the old lay-a-way idea is making a comeback. From one article from Associated Press business writers "many changes in spending habits that most Americans first saw as temporary have taken hold, perhaps for good, some economists say. This is the reality of the new American consumer — focused, cautious and tactical."

### **Some ideas for business tactics**

These trends and ideas should affect your planning and expectations. Consumers are spending, but probably doing it a little different and at a lower level. Home, lawn and landscape projects may be conceived differently. The projects may be done in stages. The homeowner may want to pay over a couple of pay periods rather than in one payment — essentially asking for a no interest loan. Consideration of alternatives like this could mean the difference between being a part of a job or not. Another idea is that businesses in the industry might forge closer alliances with each other, meaning that the relationship would be more partnership than just buyer/vendor. Thinking about doing business a little differently is a good idea.

Dr. Roger Hinson

## You have to be kidding...planting Virginia buttonweed????

Believe it or not we are intentionally planting Virginia buttonweed in St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass. I know this seems like a crazy thing to do but we are developing a new Virginia buttonweed research site at Burden Center in Baton Rouge.

Buttonweed rhizome/stem fragments and seeds were "donated" to science by a homeowner located in Opelousas. The home lawn had been devastated by tropical sod webworms and drought during the summer leaving the lawn open for takeover by buttonweed. The yard pretty much converted over to Virginia buttonweed. We actually harvested eight 55-gallon contractor bags full of buttonweed.



I suspect that we could have harvested about a 100 more from the site but we did not want to be greedy.

The buttonweed rhizomes/stem fragments were then broadcast over the top of St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass at Burden and incorporated with a disc. The turfgrass/ buttonweed areas were rolled and watered.



Hopefully (ok, more than likely) these areas will be covered by Virginia buttonweed by next spring, unfortunately simulating the average home lawn in Louisiana. These newly developing research areas will allow us to test new herbicides that may lead to the control of the #1 ranked weed problem in southern lawns.

## Algae (cont'd pg. 2)

Certain chemicals may also help to control algae in turf, but these will be effective only when used in conjunction with cultural practices to improve the growing conditions for the turf. Ferrous sulfate and copper sulfate as well as fungicides containing the active ingredients chlorothalonil, mancozeb, copper or a combination of mancozeb and copper have been reported to be effective in inhibiting the development of algae when applied preventatively. However, the repeated use of copper-containing materials may lead to the buildup of copper in the soil to levels that may be phytotoxic to the turf.

**Dr. Don Ferrin**



**Green algal growth on the thatch of a thin area of turf. Photo by Tom Koske.**



## Turfgrass 101: Role of potassium in turfgrass

Potassium is commonly known as the “stress tolerance” nutrient. For example, tolerance to cold, disease, and drought are linked to correct levels of potassium in turfgrass. Potassium is second only to nitrogen in the amount used by turfgrass.

Since we are getting ready for winter, it is important to make sure that potassium levels are adequate in lawns, sport fields and golf courses to help get through arctic blasts like we had last year. Potassium works like cellular anti-freeze by reducing the amount of free water in cells. This lowers the freezing point of cells allowing the turfgrass to tolerate cold temperatures.

Potassium can affect the rate of transpiration and water uptake through regulation of stomatal openings. Potassium provides the osmotic pull that draws water into plant roots from the soil. Bottom line, turfgrass that is potassium deficient is less able to withstand drought stress.

Reduction in the incidence of diseases such as brown patch, smut and dollar spot can be associated back to high potassium levels. This past spring and summer, I worked with a golf course in south Louisiana that could not seem to shake disease problems on his greens. The superintendant applied fungicides, but they provided only a temporary fix for the problem. It turns out a big contributor to his problem was very low levels of potassium. Because it takes a lot of water to keep greens growing, and the soil on golf greens are sand based in most cases, potassium can be prone to leaching. Keep an eye on potassium levels by frequent soil sampling. Several soil samples collected from greens that came through LSU’s Soil Lab were low to very low in potassium this year.



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## Weed ID: Crow poison or false garlic (*Nothoscordum bivalve*)

Crow poison or false garlic, from the lily family, is one of the first weeds to appear on lawns, meadows, and roadsides throughout the state. It blooms in the fall and lasts till the heat takes it out in the spring. Crow poison grows from a bulb and looks much like the wild onion, but has fewer and larger flowers on long stems and lacks the onion odor. The leaves are all at the base of the plant, about 1/8 inch wide, but often quite long, 4–15 inches. The white flowers have 6 petals with a green to brown stripe, and 6 stamens. Individual flowers are 1/2 inch across and grow in loose clusters on stalks 8–16 inches tall. Seed are highly viable and germinate readily on poor soils.

### Control

Crow poison can be very difficult to completely eradicate. However, three way combinations of 2,4-D, dicamba, mecoprop (Trimec, Strike Three, Speed Zone) or other 2,4-D containing products can be effective on the weed. Other potential herbicide options include: Image, metsulfuron (Mansion, Manor, Blade, MSM), and Monument.



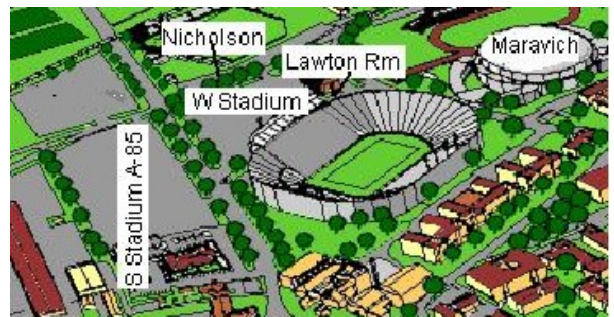
*Crow poison is one of the first weeds infesting turfgrass in the fall.*

**LTA Conference Agenda**  
**January 6, 2011**  
**Lawton Room at Tiger Stadium**

**Registration from 8:00-9:00 am**

- 8:50 **Opening Remarks**  
Dr. Don Labonte  
Department Head, School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences
- 9:00 **Recent Turfgrass Varieties (Including Tifgrand Shade Tolerant Bermudagrass)**  
Dr. Wayne Hanna, World Renowned Turfgrass Breeder  
University of Georgia.
- 10:00 **Diseases that Plague Southern Turfgrass**  
Dr. Don Ferrin and Dr. Raghuwinder Singh, Plant Pathologists  
Louisiana State University
- 11:00 **LSU Athletic Turfgrass Update**  
Eric Fasbender and Mike Watson, Turfgrass Managers  
Louisiana State University
- 11:45 **Eat and Fellowship**
- 12:30 **Business Meeting**
- 1:00 **Insect Management in Turfgrass**  
Dr. Dennis Ring  
Entomologist, Louisiana State University
- 2:00 **Economic Outlook for Green Industry in 2011**  
Dr. Roger Hinson  
LSU Agricultural Economics Professor
- 2:30 **Solving Problems on Athletic Turfgrass**  
Mr. Jeff Kershaw  
West Baton Rouge Parish Schools
- 3:00 **“Installing and maintaining athletic turfgrass”**  
Panel Discussion
- 3:30 **LSU Turfgrass**  
**Graduate Student Research**

**You will need temporary parking passes for the conference. They will be available inside the Lawton Room.**







*Serving the Turfgrass Industry for Over 50 years*

**LTA Turf Conference Registration  
January 6, 2011**

Please try to pre-register if possible. The fee for the conference is \$50 for the first person. Group discounts are available for additional conference attendees from the same company (see table below). Your fee for the conference includes membership in the LTA. Everyone with interest in turfgrass and landscape management are welcome. **This form may also be used just to pay yearly membership dues.**

**2011 Meeting Pre-Registration/Membership Dues Form**

NAME(s) \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

(Your E-mail address is necessary to receive confirmation of conference payment)

**Additional e-mail addresses of attendees:**

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Conference Registration Fees Below Include Membership in the LTA**

Number of Attendees	Amount	Total
1	\$50.00	
2	\$90.00	
3	\$130.00	
4	\$150.00	
5	\$175.00	
Each Additional Attendee	\$25.00	

\_\_\_\_ I am not attending conference but I wish to pay my LTA membership dues at \$25 per person.

Please make checks payable to Louisiana Turfgrass Association (LTA).

Mail to: Amy Blanchard  
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Tifdwarf • Mini Verde



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