

# Select for success

## When only the best will do, ask for certified sod

by Billy Skaggs, GCIA Certification Program Manager

**GEORGIA CERTIFIED TURFGRASS**  
 Certificate Number: 000000

Georgia Crop Improvement Association, Inc.  
 2425 South Millidge Avenue  
 Athens, GA 30606-1439  
 Phone 706-542-2351 Fax 706-542-9397

This grass was grown in accordance with a program designed to promote purity by adherence to published standards.  
 This certificate must be completed and attached to each bill of lading or invoice representing certified sprigs or sod produced in accordance with the Georgia Crop Improvement Association rules and regulations for production of vegetatively propagated certified turfgrass.

I certify the information provided is true and meets the Georgia Crop Improvement Association requirements for vegetatively propagated turfgrass certification.

Authorized Representative of Grower:  
 Copies: Original to Buyer (with each delivery)  
 Pink to GCIA Office (at delivery)  
 Yellow retained by Grower

\*The GCIA Turfgrass Certification Standards are available upon request.

MEMBER OF ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL SEED CERTIFYING AGENCIES

When ordering sod or bidding jobs, be sure to specify Georgia Crop Improvement Association "blue tag" certified grass. The blue certificate assures you that the sod provided by your grower has met a rigorous set of inspection criteria designed to promote high-quality, true-to-variety, and weed-free turfgrass.

**For landscape and turf professionals,** the return of warm weather means many things – some good and some not-so-good. On the positive side, spring and early summer means new clients, new projects, increased demand for services, and - hopefully - increased profits! On the flipside, these increased demands add up and can make for a stressful time. In particular, contractors can be left scrambling to source high-quality

landscape materials and other inputs to get the job done.

When it comes to purchasing plant materials, Georgia is fortunate to have many excellent nursery growers scattered across the state and, equally important, numerous wholesalers and brokers to connect you with just the right annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees. As for sod growers, we're also fortunate to have approximately 40 turf farms right here in Georgia.

When it's time to purchase sod, there are two questions that often come up: What variety is best for a particular application? Who has the variety I'm looking for?

New varieties with better pest resistance, shade tolerance, lower requirements for water, fertilizer and mowing are continually being introduced into the market. Knowing which variety best meets your particular needs is critical.

Every variety has unique characteristics that allow the variety to perform better under certain conditions. Some varieties have better shade tolerance, cold tolerance, salt tolerance, insect resistance, better wear ability, mowing height tolerance, etc. Variety contamination by common and other turf-type grasses, weeds and other plants compromise a variety's unique qualities. Selecting the proper variety for your management and location may be the most important decision you make relating to the success of a project.

### Free Buyers Guide

The Georgia Crop Improvement Association (GCIA) publishes the annual Georgia Certified Turfgrass Buyers Guide, available free to all landscape and turf professionals. Download your copy at [www.georgiacrop.com](http://www.georgiacrop.com).

Whether a landscape contractor, sports field company, or golf course manager, the 2016 GCIA Certified Turfgrass Buyers Guide contains tons of information useful for today's turf professionals:

- ▶ Complete list of certified varieties available at Georgia sod farms.
  - 11 bermudagrass varieties, 10 zoysiagrass varieties, six paspalum varieties, one centipede variety
- ▶ Descriptions of each variety along with the sod farms growing them.

### Benefits of certification

As new varieties hit the market, remember that many of these are protected by a plant patent, the Plant Variety Protection Act, and/or a contractual license agreement. As a result, these varieties may only be sold by licensed growers as a class of certified grass. A few examples of protected turf varieties include Celebration, TifEagle, TifGrand, Jamur, Zeon, and the newly-released TifTuf (see the next article in this issue for more information on TifTuf).

While variety selection is important, another crucial consideration is, “How do I know I am getting a quality product?”

**Here in Georgia, GCIA is the organization that ensures farmers, producers, turfgrass professionals and homeowners can purchase high quality seed and turfgrass which are free of noxious weeds, genetically pure, and guaranteed to perform.**

GCIA is a non-profit organization, operating as an agent for the University of Georgia.

Certified seed and turfgrass are produced and increased under a limited generation concept that is supervised by GCIA. There are three classes of certified seed and turfgrass:

- foundation material which is produced from breeder stock;
- registered material produced from foundation stock; and
- certified material produced from registered stock.

Each generation increase is field-inspected by GCIA. In 2015, over 7,500 acres of sod was inspected and certified in Georgia.

**Turfgrass certification is the only quality control offered for the protection of the sod buyer, as state and federal laws do not address vegetatively produced crops.**

## GCIA's inspection program

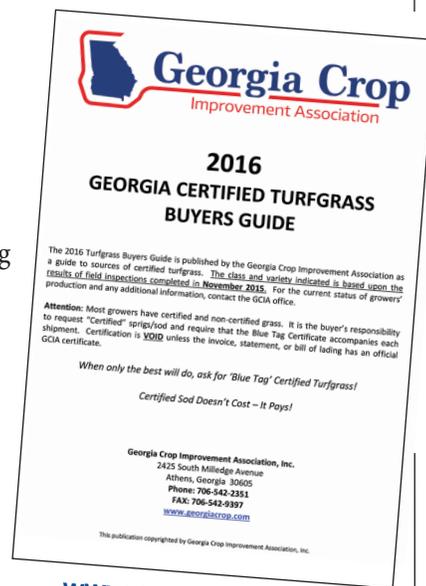
Our turfgrass growers produce “blue tag” certified sod which is field-inspected at least three times yearly by knowledgeable, trained inspectors. Each inspector is trained to recognize off-type plants, other crops, noxious and objectionable weeds, which can create unsightly and costly problems in turf.

GCIA's inspection program ensures that your sod was grown and inspected under a rigorous set of guidelines designed to promote on-going varietal purity and uniformity.

## The Georgia Department of Agriculture's “certificate” should not be confused with the GCIA “blue tag certificate.”

The Georgia Department of Agriculture issues a certificate for “apparent freedom” from insects, diseases, or other pests; however, this certificate in no way indicates varietal purity.

When only the best will do, many landscape architects specify Georgia certified “blue tag” turfgrass on their projects. When ordering sod or bidding jobs, be sure to specify Georgia Crop Improvement Association “blue tag” certified grass. The blue certificate assures you that the sod provided by your grower has met a rigorous set of inspection criteria designed to promote high-quality, true-to-variety, and weed-free turfgrass.



[www.georgiacrop.com](http://www.georgiacrop.com)

## Online resources

For more information on certified turfgrass, visit GCIA online at [www.georgiacrop.com](http://www.georgiacrop.com). There you will find links to the GCIA Turfgrass Buyers Guide, Certified Turf Production Manual, and other turf articles and links.

Also, we invite you to visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GeorgiaCropImprovementAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaCropImprovementAssociation).

Your turf questions and suggestions are always welcome! 

Visit GCIA's website to download your Buyers Guide.



### About the author

Billy Skaggs is the Certification Program Manager for the Georgia Crop Improvement Association.

P: 706-542-2351

C: 770-519-7124

E: [billy.skaggs@georgiacrop.com](mailto:billy.skaggs@georgiacrop.com)