

# Georgia's Sod and Landscape Industry

**Georgia Sod Production;** *Ken Morrow, Sod farmer and industry consultant*

**Georgia is among the top sod producing states in the southeast and has built an incredible reputation across the globe for outstanding quality production.**



- In 2018, turfgrass was grown on 26,651 acres across Georgia with a farmgate value of \$118,321,229 (UGA, CAES).
- Georgia's sales tax exemption for sod sold direct from the grower allows Georgia sod producers to compete fairly with contiguous states that also exempt such taxes.
- The UGA CAES Turfgrass program has developed new sod varieties that help address environmental challenges such as water efficiency and turf quality. These grasses are often licensed and certified through UGA, generating funds to further their research and development.

**University of Georgia Turfgrass Program;** *Dr. Clint Waltz, Extension Specialist - Turfgrass*

**UGA CAES has a nationally recognized turfgrass program. Started in the 1950s, UGA scientists and Extension service specialists support the growing landscape and turf related agricultural industries.**



- Investments by the Georgia General Assembly and state leaders have allowed UGA to develop turfgrasses that now cover more golf courses, athletic fields, parks and lawns than any other turf varieties in the world.
- UGA leads in the development of many grass cultivars with major impact. Several superior turfgrass cultivars include a cold hardy centipedegrass, TifBlair, with characteristics that make it suited for lawns and roadsides. Additionally, bermudagrass breeding and research developed TifEagle, TifSport and TifGrand, which all benefit recreational facilities such as greens and fairways on golf courses and a variety of other sports fields.
- Water conservation remains a priority and we are making progress. TifTuf, a drought tolerant bermudagrass, was developed by UGA and released for farm production in 2015. TifTuf exhibits superior drought tolerance compared to older bermudagrass varieties, using less water and staying green longer without irrigation due to its unique physiological characteristics. Research shows TifTuf uses 38% less water and retains 95% more green leaf tissue during drought stress when compared when compared to previously developed UGA bermudagrass varieties.

**Georgia Urban Ag Council (UAC);** *Mary Kay Woodworth, Executive Director*

**UAC is Georgia's premier green industry association for professionals involved in all sectors of the industry, including expert landscape services, sod production, growers, garden centers and tree care.**



- UAC proudly represents one of the largest and most successful industries in Georgia, with \$9.9 billion in annual economic impact and a top ag sector employer with 66,527 in total employment. (UGA, CAES)
- Workforce shortages are our greatest challenge. We are thankful to have served on an Ag Workforce Study Committee in 2019 led by former Senate Ag Committee Chair, John Wilkinson.
- Conservation, education, beautification, and economic development are all key areas of focus for our industry and membership. UGA Extension is a vital partner in these efforts.