

SUMMER
2025



NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



From the Director's Desk

PAGE 2



2025 Upcoming AG Events

PAGE 3



2025 ITGAP Academy

PAGE 4



AOSCA 2025 Annual Meeting

PAGE 5



**2025 Georgia/Alabama Seed
Associations' Annual
Convention**

PAGE 6



Officers, Directors & Staff

PAGE 7



MEMBER



MEMBER

From the Director's desk

I hope everyone is having a good summer and your crops are doing well. It's definitely been a busy few months for our team here at GCIA. Our field staff inspected small grains back in the spring, as well as completed the first round of turfgrass inspections. Our administrative staff had a busy spring as well including printing over 3.2 million peanut seed tags in preparation for the planting season.

Since then, administrative staff moved onto processing peanut applications for field inspection – the last of which are being completed as I write this article. Field inspectors are now working through the second round of turfgrass inspections and are preparing to move on to peanut field inspections next month. As I said, it's been a busy time for all of us at GCIA. Most of our traditional certification members have heard us talk about the organic certification program but have little to no experience with the day-to-day workings of the program. Organic certification is an internationally recognized program which falls under the purview of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). GCIA and other accredited certifiers must follow the rules and regulations of the NOP when auditing organic farms and processors. As such, the NOP audits us (and other certifiers) on a periodic basis, and earlier this month, we had a visit from NOP auditors here in Athens.

While I understand the purpose of such compliance audits, it's rarely an enjoyable process. I've never had an IRS audit, but I'm guessing it feels similar to what we experienced a few weeks ago. The NOP auditors were fine people and certainly have a job to do. That said, such processes almost always come with undue stress and burdensome requests for information. Thankfully, we came through the audit relatively unscathed with only two minor findings. A big thanks to the organic team – Billie, Daniel, Jeanne, Reggie and Terry – for their hard work and preparation!

I'm grateful the audit is behind us, but it got me to thinking about all the regulations, bureaucracy, and other government “red tape” our members and clients go through while doing business.

GCIA peanut, turfgrass, and small grain producers deal with various rules and regulations from agencies such as DOL, EPA, EPD, GAFFIS, OSHA, USDA, and state departments of agriculture. And if your business produces food or food grade products, there's a whole other level of regulation and scrutiny – FDA, GDA and 3rd party food safety auditors. All while trying to run a profitable farm or business.

In closing, I want to thank all our members & clients – turfgrass growers, seed producers, organic producers and our food safety clients – for your dedication and perseverance in navigating these many challenges and continuing to run successful farms and businesses. We appreciate you and look forward to serving you in the years to come.

Billy Skaggs
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2025 UPCOMING AG EVENTS

GCIA Buying Point Training



You are invited to join us on Tuesday, August 26, 2025, for our annual Peanut Buying Point Training Session. Again this year, we are meeting at the Georgia Federal-State Inspection Service Offices in Albany. The address is 951 Pecan Grove Drive, Albany, Georgia. Thanks in advance to Ms. Teresa Cox for hosting us. PLEASE NOTE: Registration will begin at 1:00 pm, and the program will begin at 1:15 pm. We will be discussing requirements for handling certified seed as well as the application process.

Speakers include Tyron Spearman, National Peanut Buying Points Association, Dr. Jack Davis, JLA Labs and Dr. Nino Brown, UGA Peanut Breeder. The program will conclude by 3:30 pm.

Buying Points: A buying point must appoint a representative knowledgeable of GCIA rules to be responsible for the buying point's compliance with the published rules governing certified seed production, handling and storage. The GCIA representative(s) must attend a training session offered by GCIA no less than once every two years. A peanut buying point is any facility that receives and/or stores certified peanut seed. Each approved buying point location must have an onsite representative. A representative may not be responsible for overseeing more than one location.

Please RSVP by August 22nd by email to becki.hicks@georgiacrop.com & leslie.wright@georgiacrop.com or by phone: 706-542-2351

American Peanut Shellers
Association- Pre Harvest
Meeting- August 18-20
Albany, Georgia
Click here for more info:
[Pre Harvest Meeting](#)



Georgia Peanut Tour- September 16-18 Valdosta, Georgia. Click here for more info: [Georgia Peanut Tour](#)

Sunbelt Ag Expo- October 14-16 Moultrie, Georgia
Click here for more info: [Sunbelt Ag Expo](#)



2025 ITGAP Academy hosted by GCIA



On June 3-6, Georgia Crop Improvement Association hosted an ITGAP Academy for our international turfgrass growers and inspectors. ITGAP stands for International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program and has been active since 2000. ITGAP is a quality assurance program that oversees production sites around the globe, to ensure genetic uniformity within each turfgrass variety. The goal of the program is to provide high quality grasses of proven performance, known pedigree, and contaminant free.

We had our first stop at Trilith Studios, which was a great tour of their facility and really an eye opener as to how large the entertainment business is in Georgia. To start the academy, we visited the U.S. Soccer Training Facility in Fayetteville, GA.

Throughout the first part of the week, international growers and inspectors were able to attend presentations given by multiple scientists at the University of Georgia Griffin Campus. These presentations ranged from agronomy, entomology, pathology, and genomics. ITGAP managing director, Mr. Don Roberts, reviewed inspection protocols and gave an informative presentation to growers and inspectors. We were able to tour the UGA Griffin Campus to see field research plots and their DNA testing lab.

Shortly after the campus tour, we traveled to NG Turf in Whitesburg, Georgia for a sod farm visit. To conclude the week, we made a short trip to Athens, GA and toured Georgia Seed Development. Upon arrival, we were able to look at foundation fields of multiple warm season turfgrass varieties. While visiting, we listened to presentations from GSD, UGARF, GCIA, UGA, and one of our international turf growers. We certainly had an exciting week and are thankful for all the hard work that was put into this Academy.



Athens Turfgrass Research and Education Center



US Soccer Training Facility



NG Turf in Whitesburg, Georgia



GSD Iron Horse Farm Visit

GCIA attends AOSCA 2025 Annual Meeting



The annual meeting of the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) was held June 16-19th in Overland Park, KS. Billy Skaggs and Alex Gilreath attended the meeting representing GCIA. Blake Fleeman of Georgia Seed Development attended and represented their foundation seed program. Kansas Crop Improvement Association (KCIA) served as the hosts of the 2025 annual meeting.

As AOSCA President, Billy Skaggs presided over the meeting and provided an association update to all AOSCA members. On Tuesday, June 17th, the annual AOSCA awards banquet was held with Skaggs being the emcee of the event. Skaggs said the highlight of the evening for him was recognizing Dustin Auman, Executive Director North Carolina Crop Improvement Association and Matthew Young, Manager of Tennessee Crop Improvement Association. Skaggs has worked alongside these two men throughout his career and said they have always been a valuable resource along the way.

Skaggs presented Mr. Bradley Stancil, South Carolina Crop Improvement/Clemson University with the Excellence in Innovation Award for developing an inspection app for field inspectors so they can work more efficiently by inputting their information in a phone or tablet while still being in the field. Also during the banquet, Skaggs' second term as President came to an end and Mr. Doug Miller with the Canadian Seed Growers' Association was elected President for the 2025-2026 year. Skaggs will serve as past president during the 2025-2026 year.

Thanks to Kansas Crop Improvement Association for the great hospitality, and thanks to the AOSCA staff for their hard work and preparation. It was a great meeting! To see more photos from the annual meeting please visit <https://aosca.org/>. To view video highlights of the meeting click [HERE](#).



Pictured: Dustin Auman, NC Crop Improvement;
Matthew Young, TN Crop Improvement; Billy
Skaggs, GA Crop Improvement



Pictured: Brad Stancil, SC Crop Improvement/
Clemson University & Billy Skaggs, GA Crop
Improvement

2025 Georgia/Alabama Seed Associations' Annual Convention



The 2025 Georgia/Alabama Seed Associations' Annual Convention at The King and Prince Golf & Beach Resort in St. Simons was a great success as always! The convention was held July 15-16th with 139 attendees. We had a great line up of speakers including Commissioner Tyler Harper, Georgia Department of Agriculture and Dr. Sarah Wilbanks, CEO of the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies. At the Annual Banquet, Dr. Roger Boerma was awarded with the Hall of Fame Award for his service to the seed industry and all his accomplishments while being Executive Director at Georgia Seed Development. John Raley, R&R Seeds was awarded the Distinguished Service Award and Cole McNair, Birdsong Peanuts received the Seedsman of the Year Award. Congratulations to all the recipients, well deserved! Blake Fleeman, Georgia Seed Development was nominated as President and Russ Beckham, Merit Auctions was awarded for his service and leadership as president for 2023-2025. Thank you to all the members, sponsors, speakers, and staff that made this another successful convention!



Pictured: Blake Fleeman, GSDC; Dr. Roger Boerma, GSDC; Cole McNair, Birdsong Peanuts; John Raley, R & R Seed; Russ Beckham, Merit Auctions



Pictured: Alex Gilreath, Becki Hicks & Billy Skaggs-Georgia Crop Improvement



Pictured: Georgia Agricultural Commissioner, Tyler Harper



Pictured: Sarah Wilbanks, CEO of AOSCA



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