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either of these initiatives, please feel free to reach out. If you are already familiar with them, I encourage you to consider becoming a sustaining member or suggesting a golf course we should contact regarding the Chip-In program.

Additionally, I am committed to advancing the third year of the MRTF's three-year strategic plan to close our current progress gaps. Finally, I want to strengthen engagement among board committees. While many serve on committees, my goal is to ensure active participation so that our committees successfully achieve their objectives.

Thank you for your continued support of MRTF. We could not be the excellent foundation we are without you.

Best regards,

Michelle Hancock-Hartzler
2026 MRTF President

2026 MRTF Presidential Address

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)



Dear Members,

While the groundhog may have predicted six more weeks of winter, that means we are already narrowing in on the final two weeks.

I want to introduce myself as your 2026 MRTF President. I am Michelle Hancock-Hartzler, a partner at J&D Turf. I bring 17 years of experience in lawn care and irrigation from Kentucky, along with nearly 15 years in sports turf. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve you.

As President, my focus is to build upon the work of my predecessors by enhancing the membership experience and encouraging growth. My primary goal is to increase our membership by 10%.

I also aim to increase support for the foundation through fundraising efforts like the sustaining membership add-on and the Mike Dunk Chip-In program. If you would like more information on

2026 Indiana Green Expo Delivers Another Year of Top-Tier Education, a Diverse Tradeshow, and Networking Opportunities

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)



2026 Indiana Green Expo Delivers Strong Educational Impact, Industry Engagement, and Measurable Value

The 2026 Indiana Green Expo (IGE), held February 9-11 at the Indiana Convention Center, marked another highly successful

year for one of the Midwest's leading educational and networking events for turfgrass, landscape, nursery, and green industry professionals. The Expo drew 1,412 attendees and hosted 113 exhibiting companies, reinforcing its role as a premier regional hub for science-based training, professional development, and industry innovation.

Comprehensive Education for a Diverse Industry

Education remained the centerpiece of the 2026 program. The event opened with nine intensive workshops on February 9, offering hands-on training in plant diagnostics, communication skills, turfgrass and landscape fundamentals, and plant selection for challenging landscapes. These sessions provided practical, applied instruction for professionals across multiple sectors.

February 10-11, attendees participated in more than a dozen concurrent educational tracks, covering topics such as pest and disease management, soil health, sports turf renovation, native and pollinator habitat management, invasive species control, and leadership and business development. Survey respondents praised the breadth and relevance of the content, citing strong sessions across the program.

A High-Value Trade Show Experience

The IGE trade show featured 113 exhibitors, offering attendees direct access to new technologies, equipment, plant material, and services supporting modern turf and landscape management. Participants described the trade show as a major highlight, with one new attendee noting that the Expo was "larger than anticipated" and provided exceptional opportunities to connect with vendors and colleagues.

Strong Participant Outcomes and Measurable Impact

Post-event survey results underscore the Expo's educational and economic value:

- o 74% learned something new
- o 71% increased awareness or confidence in key topics
- o 82% plan to share knowledge with colleagues
- o 93% of returning attendees have previously adopted practices from IGE that resulted in improvements in turf quality, landscape maintenance, resource efficiency, or economic return

Survey respondents believe they will save an estimated \$3,500 annually for their organization using information gained at the 2026 Expo.

A Collaborative Effort Supporting Indiana's Green Industry

IGE is jointly presented by the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation (MRTF) and the Indiana Nursery & Landscape Association (INLA), with program leadership from Purdue University Extension specialists. The 2026 event marked the 20th year of this partnership, which continues to deliver high-quality,

research-based education tailored to Midwest conditions.

About the Indiana Green Expo

The Indiana Green Expo is an annual three-day conference and trade show serving turfgrass, landscape, nursery, and green industry professionals. The event provides more than 100 hours of educational programming, hands-on workshops, and access to industry-leading exhibitors. Proceeds support research, education, and workforce development initiatives that strengthen Indiana's green industry.

Mark your calendar for next year's Expo: February 8-19, 2027.

A Big THANK YOU to Our 2026 Sustaining Members!

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)

As always, the MRTF wants to express our gratitude for the additional support we receive from many of our members each year. So far, in 2026, 52 of our members have opted to upgrade their membership to our [Sustaining Membership](#) level. This option is available every year to add to your membership and supports a turf student scholarship and provides some additional funds to the MRTF's Enhancement Endowment (Turf Research Center Expansion Project).

THANK YOU to the following companies and individuals:

Advanced Turf Solutions	Mark M. Holeman Inc.
Arrowhead Golf Course	Meridian Hills Country Club
BAEP	Midwest Turf and Forage Incorporated
Bridgford Crossing / IMS Golf Maintenance	N. S. S. Cleaning Service, Inc.
Bridgewater Golf	Pebble Brook Golf Club
Bunch Nurseries, Inc.	Pine Valley Country Club
Butler University	R&B Topsoil (retired)
Commercial Grounds Maintenance	Rain Bird
Country Club of Terre Haute	Randy Kane (self)
Cragen Lawn Care	R&M Inc. / Ricci's Landscape Management
Crown Lawn Service	Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
David George (self)	RT Yard Care (Retired)
Earlyvine Pest Control	Sygenta
Elcona Country Club	The Aquatrols Company
Evansville CC	The Bridgewater Club
Fort Wayne Country Club	The CSCD Companies
Golf Club of Alexandria	The Club at Holiday Farms
Golf Club of Indiana	The Fort Golf Resort
Green Earth Lawn Services	Total Lawn Care, Inc.
Green Light Field Works dba J&D Turf	TruGreen
Hamlet Golf Course	Turfware Equipment Company
Helmis Lawn Specialists, Inc.	Tuscan Valley Landscaping, Ltd.
Heritage Landscape Supply Group	Vibrant Outdoors
Hubinger Landscaping Corp	Wellman's Landdivision
Knox Fertilizer	
Lawn Tamer, LLC	
LTR Design Inc. / Terra-Equipment	
Lush Lawns LLC	

Your support means so much to the students and researchers at Purdue. The industry will benefit from your generosity!

If you'd like to become a sustaining member, please email admin@mrtf.org.

Sustaining member list generated on February 23, 2026. The list will be updated occasionally.

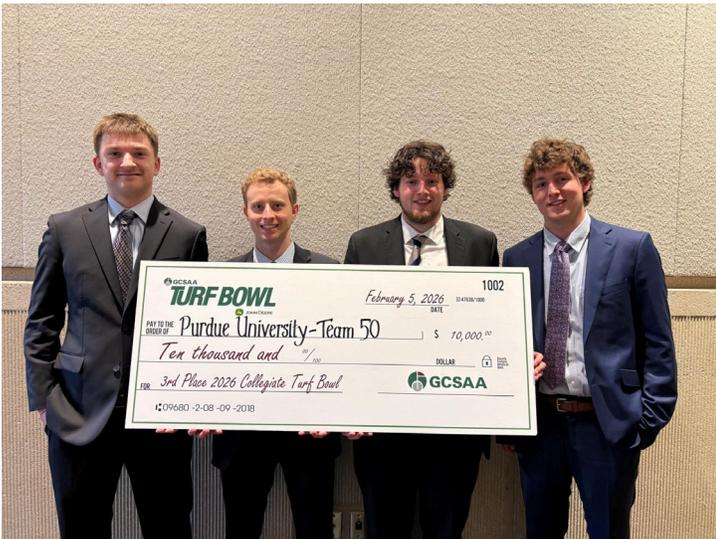
Turf Students Spotlight: Turf Students Placed Third in GCSAA Collegiate Quiz Bowl

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)

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The Purdue turf students competed last week at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Collegiate Quiz Bowl competition at the GCSAA annual meeting in Orlando, FL. This hands-on exam tests the students plant/seed/pest/equipment identification skills, practical turfgrass calculations for related to golf turf management. The Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department sent 16 students (four teams of four each) to the competition to compete against students from across the USA and Canada. The Quiz Bowl attracted a total of 288 total students.



The top Purdue team represented by Otto Hoehl, Gavin Kenning, Abe Tebbe and Will Mahan placed 3rd out of 78 total teams. In addition to the quiz bowl, the students had the chance to attend educational sessions and the always popular golf industry trade show where they visited industry vendors as well as networking with Golf Course Managers from across the world.

Campus Spotlight: Glenn Hardebeck Celebrates 30 Years at Purdue!

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)



The MRTF would like to congratulate Glenn Hardebeck, the Turf Research Center Manager, on 30 wonderful years at Purdue University! We thank you for all you do!

To learn more about Glenn and his service to Purdue and the industry, [read more](#).

Tom List Honored as the MRTF's 2026 Distinguished Service Award Winner!

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)



Tom List, owner of List Lawn Care, is the 2026 MRTF Distinguished Service Award Winner. The MRTF Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor given by the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation. It is awarded to individuals who have given of themselves through the years for the betterment of the Turfgrass Industry. The service by these individuals has been in many different forms: Some have used their leadership abilities to serve on the MRTF Board of Directors and steer the Foundation through the changes needed to meet the future, others have donated their time to work with students and help train them to be future turf industry leaders, while others have worked an entire career dedicated to serving those in the turf industry.

Tom grew up working for his father, the golf course superintendent at Old Oakland Golf Club in Indianapolis. He worked many years on the golf team through high school and decided to pursue the turf profession. Tom went to Purdue University and graduated from the Turf Science program under Dr. Daniels. After college, Tom moved to Georgia for several years, working in the lawn care industry. He then moved back to Tipton, Indiana, and worked as an assistant superintendent at the Kokomo Country Club. While working at the club, Tom also started his own lawn care business on the side. Tom decided to pursue his lawn care business full-time at that point. Tom has grown List Lawn Care into a very successful business over the last 23 years, servicing North Central Indiana through Indianapolis. Tom is a well-respected leader in the industry. He served 6 years on the board of directors for IPLLA, and most recently, Tom served 8 years of board service with the MRTF. Tom has been a huge supporter of Purdue University, the MRTF, and the industry as a whole.

A celebration of Tom's service and the MRTF Distinguished Service Award Reception was held at the Indiana Green Expo on February 10th from 5:00 - 7:00 pm at the Indiana Convention Center. Thank you for all you do for the turf industry, Tom!

Research Spotlight: Revisiting Our Roadmap for Establishing Conservation Plantings on Golf Courses

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)

By: Dr. Doug Richmond, Purdue University

I last touched on this subject back in April of 2023 as we were just getting started in our project converting 6.5 acres of the Kampen-Cosler course at Purdue to native prairie. Since then, we've learned a few things about how golf course "no-play zones" can be converted into native plantings that support biodiversity while fitting within the operational realities of course management. Our goal was to identify which restoration decisions actually drive early ecological and aesthetic outcomes during the first years following renovation.

Under the watchful but curious eyes of Jim Scott and Kyle Post, we conducted field studies across multiple sites on the Kampen-Cosler course, comparing renovated and non-renovated areas and testing different seeding methods (broadcast vs. drill) and seeding seasons (fall vs. spring). We monitored plant community development, floral bloom production, and pollinator communities over two growing seasons to better understand how these decisions influence early establishment and conservation utility.

One of the clearest findings from our work is that prairie renovation itself was the primary driver of early ecological gains. When existing vegetation was removed and replaced with a native prairie seed mix, renovated areas consistently supported greater native plant abundance, richness, and diversity, along with substantially higher floral bloom production than non-renovated turf. In our trials, effective site preparation was also critical for managing persistent weeds we encountered, particularly Canada thistle, mare's tail, and smooth brome, which could otherwise dominate early establishment and slow development of the native plant community. While these species were notable challenges at our locations, the specific weed pressures superintendents face will likely be variable and site-specific.

The increases in floral resources we observed were accompanied by rapid biological responses, with renovated areas supporting higher bee and butterfly richness and greater bee diversity within just two years.

In contrast, the specific details of seeding, whether broadcast or drill, or fall versus spring, generally had weaker and more transient effects during the early years of establishment. While certain treatment differences appeared during individual sampling periods, they were not consistently expressed across seasons or years. This suggests that once renovation successfully shifts the competitive balance away from existing vegetation, plant community development tends to follow similar early trajectories regardless of the exact seeding approach used.

We also examined outcomes under both longer and shorter site preparation timelines, but the overarching pattern remained the same; renovation status dominated early plant community responses, while differences among seeding approaches were comparatively modest and inconsistent. These results highlight that, in these situations, the act of renovation itself, disrupting established vegetation and creating establishment windows, may be far more influential than the finer details of how or when seed is applied.

From a management standpoint, this work reinforces a practical message for superintendents: if the goal is to achieve visible and ecological benefits quickly, the greatest return comes from prioritizing thorough renovation and site preparation with patient and sustained efforts to eliminate persistent weedy species paying big dividends. Seeding method and timing still matter, mainly from a logistical standpoint, but our results suggest they can be selected with some flexibility without substantially altering early outcomes.

Overall, our findings demonstrate that renovating no-play zones to native prairie plant communities can yield meaningful increases in native plant diversity, floral resources, and pollinator richness within a relatively short time frame. By focusing first on effective renovation and then tailoring seeding decisions to fit available equipment and scheduling constraints, golf course superintendents can integrate conservation plantings into out-of-play areas, but maintaining realistic expectations for early establishment and performance are key.

For superintendents, the takeaway is simple: invest in renovation and let seeding logistics be flexible. When it comes to prairie plantings in no-play zones, getting the renovation right matters far more than getting the seeding perfect.

Research Spotlight: Can You Tank-Mix Nutrients with Primo Maxx Without Losing Efficacy?

(Aaron J Patton, ajpatton@purdue.edu)

By: Aaron Patton and Naba Amgain, Purdue University

Why We Did This Research

Golf course superintendents routinely apply the plant growth regulator (PGR) trinexapac-ethyl (Primo® Maxx) to suppress vertical shoot growth, improve playing surface quality, and reduce mowing frequency on putting greens. It is equally common practice to tank-mix Primo Maxx with micronutrient products containing iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), or zinc (Zn), or to use spray water that is naturally high in calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg)—what is commonly called “hard water.” These elements are divalent cations, and research in weed science has clearly shown that divalent cations can reduce the efficacy of certain herbicides by forming chemical complexes that limit absorption and translocation. Because Primo Maxx shares some chemical characteristics with those sensitive herbicides, concern arose that similar antagonism could occur with PGR applications. Earlier work in perennial ryegrass suggested this might be possible. Yet no research had directly examined this question under putting green management—until now.

What We Did

Researchers at Purdue University conducted a two-year greenhouse study using TifEagle™ hybrid bermudagrass

maintained at putting green height (0.2 inches). We tested this on bermudagrass because this work was part of a collaborative project with the University of Arkansas and the University of Tennessee looking at managing shaded warm-season putting greens. Primo® Maxx was applied at 3 fl oz/A—the labeled rate for ultradwarf bermudagrass—either alone in distilled water or tank-mixed with Ca, Mg, Fe, Mn, or Zn. Cation concentrations were set to achieve very hard water conditions. Vertical growth was tracked three times per week over the 42-day study period, and clipping yield was measured at the end of the trial. The experiment was repeated in a second year to confirm the results.

What We Found

The results were consistent and clear across both years: Primo® Maxx effectively suppressed bermudagrass growth regardless of which divalent cation was present in the spray solution (see Figure). Compared to the untreated control, all Primo Maxx treatments—whether applied in distilled water or tank-mixed with Ca, Mg, Fe, Mn, or Zn—achieved 57 to 63% suppression in clipping yield over the 42-day period. No antagonism was detected, and no phytotoxicity was observed under any treatment. Spray solution pH ranged widely (3.5 to 9.3 depending on the cation source), and water hardness ranged from 0 to 35 grains/gallon, yet PGR performance was unaffected across this entire range.

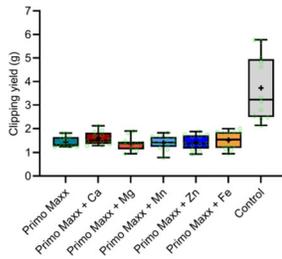
Why no antagonism? The likely explanation lies in the chemistry of the formulation. Primo Maxx is formulated as an ester (trinexapac-ethyl), and ester-formulated products are generally not susceptible to the same cation-based antagonism seen with herbicides formulated as weak acids.

Practical Recommendations for Superintendents

Based on this research, golf course superintendents managing putting greens can confidently:

- Tank-mix Primo® Maxx with iron, manganese, or zinc micronutrient products without concern that the PGR’s efficacy will be reduced.
- Apply Primo® Maxx using well water or other naturally hard water sources without expecting a reduction in growth suppression.

It is worth noting that this study was conducted on a single hybrid bermudagrass cultivar following a single application. Results under different turfgrass species, management intensities, or repeated-application programs may differ. Additionally, water quality factors beyond those evaluated here could potentially influence trinexapac-ethyl behavior and warrant further investigation.



This newsletter article is a condensed version of a peer-reviewed research paper. For full methods, data, and discussion, please refer to the original publication:

Amgain, N.R., M.D. Richardson, J.T. Brosnan, and A.J. Patton. 2026. Water quality effects on trinexapac-ethyl performance in hybrid bermudagrass. *Crop, Forage, and Turfgrass Mgmt.* In press.

2026 – 2027 MRTF Event Calendar

(Ashley Ryan Breed, ashbreed@purdue.edu)

February 9-11, 2026

Indiana Green Expo; Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, IN

July 21, 2026

Turf & Landscape Field Day; Daniel Turf Center, W Lafayette, IN

August 4, 2026

Lawn care Diagnostic Training; Daniel Turf Center, W Lafayette, IN

November 1 - December 18, 2026 (tentative start date...)

Herbicide Workshop, ONLINE

November 17-18, 2026

Turf & Landscape Seminar; Daniel Turf Center, West Lafayette, IN

December 10, 2026

Herbicide Workshop; Daniel Turf Center, West Lafayette, IN

February 8-10, 2027

Indiana Green Expo; Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, IN

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Other

MRTF Golf Day Fundraiser, TBA

Herbicide Workshop - Kentucky, TBA

Day of Service, TBA

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