

# FLORIDA

## TURF DIGEST



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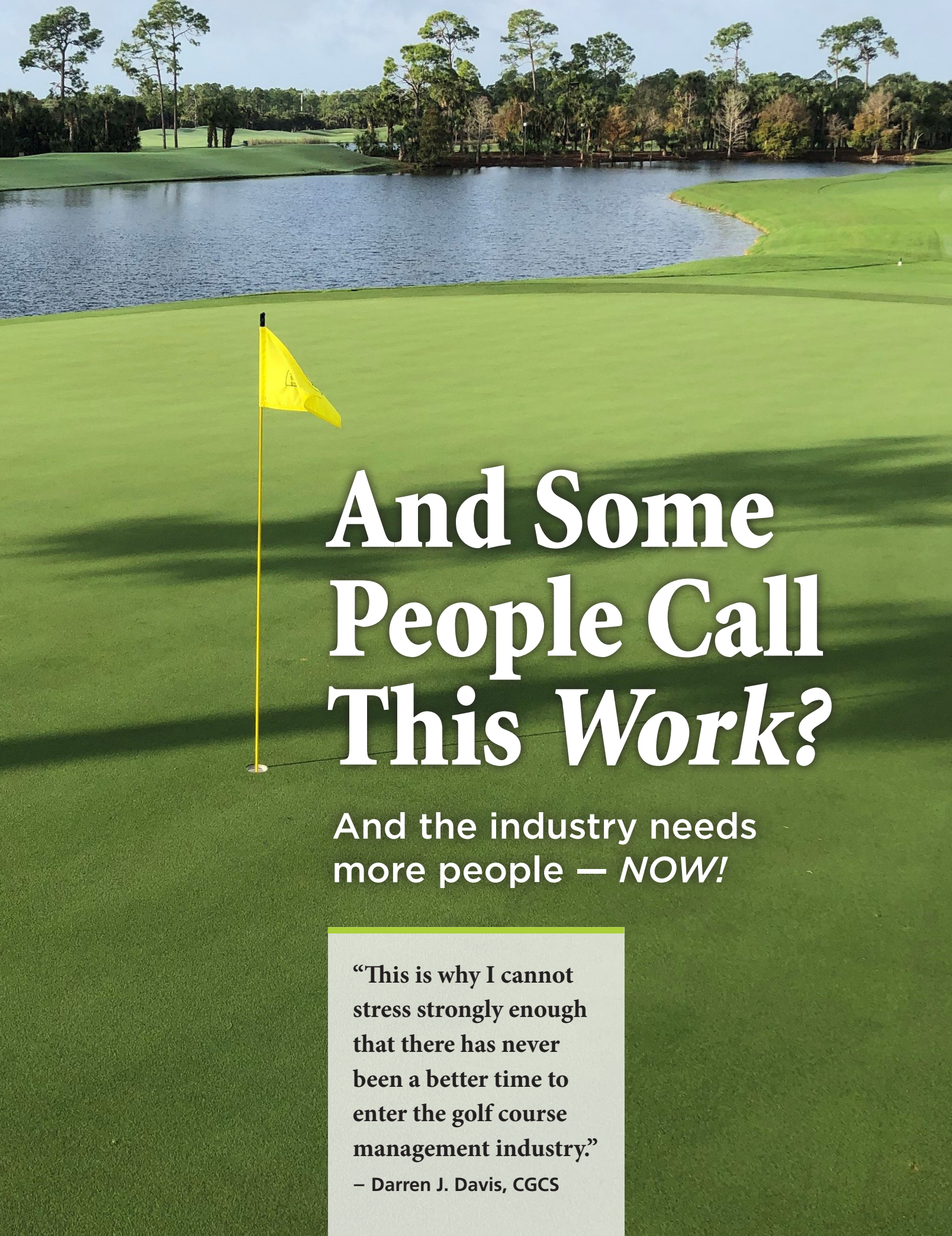
## SPECIAL GOLF SECTION AND BMP UPDATE

**Also in this issue:**

Science vs. Policy

FTGA Turf Seminars

Associations Working for You



# And Some People Call This *Work*?

And the industry needs  
more people — *NOW!*

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management industry.”**

**– Darren J. Davis, CGCS**

By **Darren J. Davis, CGCS** and Guest Editor

**T**hose who know me are aware of my passion for the golf course industry and the absolute joy I feel being able to do what I love every day as a golf course superintendent. In my time in the industry, I have never shied away from expressing my passion and encouraging others to consider a career in golf course management.

Although it's been over 30 years, I can still remember the first day I strapped on a pair of work boots and became a member of the agronomy team at Golden Eagle Golf and Country Club in my hometown of Tallahassee, Florida. It was a crisp fall morning in 1988, and I arrived before sunrise with a great deal of anxiety. However, that anxiety was short lived, and it was quickly apparent I had found my true calling in life. The absolute joy I felt from that day forward on that beautiful piece of property provided all the motivation I needed to realize I wanted a career in golf course management, and it's a decision I've never regretted!

In my time in the industry, I have seen significant changes. One of the more significant and concerning changes I have witnessed is the supply and demand of assistant golf course superintendents. The industry has gone from a period of incredible need for turfgrass program graduates, to a time of saturation, and now back to a period of need at the level that many even describe as a time of *crisis*. This is why I cannot stress strongly enough that there has never been a better time to enter the golf course management industry.

In the late '80s and '90s when I stumbled upon the profession, turfgrass management programs could not graduate enough students to fill the available assistant superintendent positions. At that time, the feeling in the industry was that we needed to open a course a day just to keep up with golfer demand. Unfortunately, that led to a period of saturation, which resulted in frustration among students, recent graduates and aspiring assistant superintendents. Consequently, turfgrass programs across the country all witnessed a drastic decline in applications. Many universities even cancelled their turfgrass programs completely.

The GCSAA does a biennial Compensation and Benefits survey that enables the association to provide data and track trends in the industry. In 2009 the average tenure for an assistant golf course superintendent was 4.1 years. In 2011 it increased to 4.3 years, in 2013 it went to 4.5 years, in 2015 it grew to 4.8 years, in 2017 it was 5.1

years and on the last published survey in 2019, the data showed the average tenure was 5.3 years. Not exactly a positive trend for students or current assistants who have aspirations of advancement. However, when you look at the average tenure of a golf course superintendent on the same survey the trend is understood.

In 2009 the average tenure of a golf course superintendent was 13.5 years. In 2011 it increased to 14.7 years, in 2013 it grew to 15.4 years, in 2015 it was 15.9 years, in 2017 it was 16.2 years and in 2019 the tenure of a GCSAA golf course superintendent was 16.4 years. Well, if you are a golf course superintendent this is a good trend, but again, not great if you are a student in a turfgrass program or an assistant superintendent looking to advance in the industry.

However, this trend is reversing and will continue to do so! As I traveled the world over the last few years serving the GCSAA membership, the message I have spread is there has never been a better time to enter the industry! The reason is easy to understand and justify. Due to the reduction of graduates of turfgrass programs over the last decade, the availability of qualified assistant golf course superintendents has declined dramatically. In my early years as a golf course superintendent, I would receive hundreds of resumes for an open assistant position; today, I am lucky to receive ten. It is truly a critical time for the industry, which is why it's important for all golf course superintendents to encourage potential students to consider the industry and enroll in a turfgrass program at an accredited university.

Quite simply, it is a function of supply and demand that dictates why there has never been a better time to be in the industry. As current golf course superintendents begin to retire, assistant superintendents will soon get to pick the job they want! This trend is currently being seen by students graduating from turfgrass programs today who get to choose which job they want because the number of open positions far exceeds the number of graduating students. This is the reason there has never been a better time to enter this great industry! 🌱



*Darren Davis, CGCS, is 82nd President, GCSAA; Past President, FTGA; and Golf Course Superintendent, Olde Florida Golf Club. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/DarrenJDavisGCS>.*

A photograph of a golf course at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the sky and the landscape. In the foreground, a green is visible with a yellow flag on a tall pole. The background features a line of trees and distant mountains.

AND SOME PEOPLE  
GET TO CALL THIS  
WORK



## TODAY'S GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT

If you have a passion for working with nature, people and technological equipment, a love for the game of golf and making decisions concerning the environment, you may consider becoming part of the exciting world within the golf industry as a GCSAA superintendent.

Golf course management is a profession with a lot of variety. A golf course superintendent enjoys an attractive employment setting with frequent opportunities to be outdoors on the golf course.

Today's GCSAA superintendents are educated leaders with a broad base of facility management skills. They are trusted stewards of the land and oversee a facility's largest financial asset. The superintendent manages labor, time, materials and finances in a manner that is compatible with the environment, meets financial goals and enhances the enjoyment of the game.

Those who complete the Certified Golf Course Superintendent program administered by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America often earn higher salaries and have greater opportunity to advance in the profession. GCSAA superintendents will often go on to other areas of management, such as general manager of a facility.

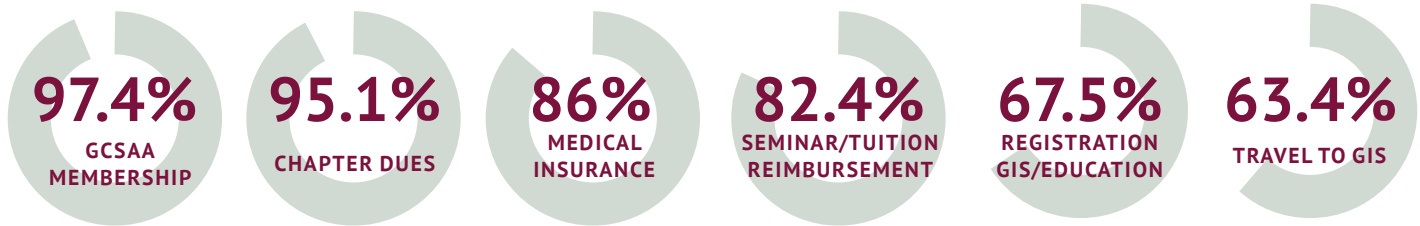
## GOLF COURSES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Did you know that more than 90% of an average 18-hole golf course provides critical green space in any community or watershed? An average 18-hole course is 151 acres that includes 95 acres of turfgrass, 26 acres of natural/native areas and 6.4 acres of water features (ponds, streams, wetlands etc.).

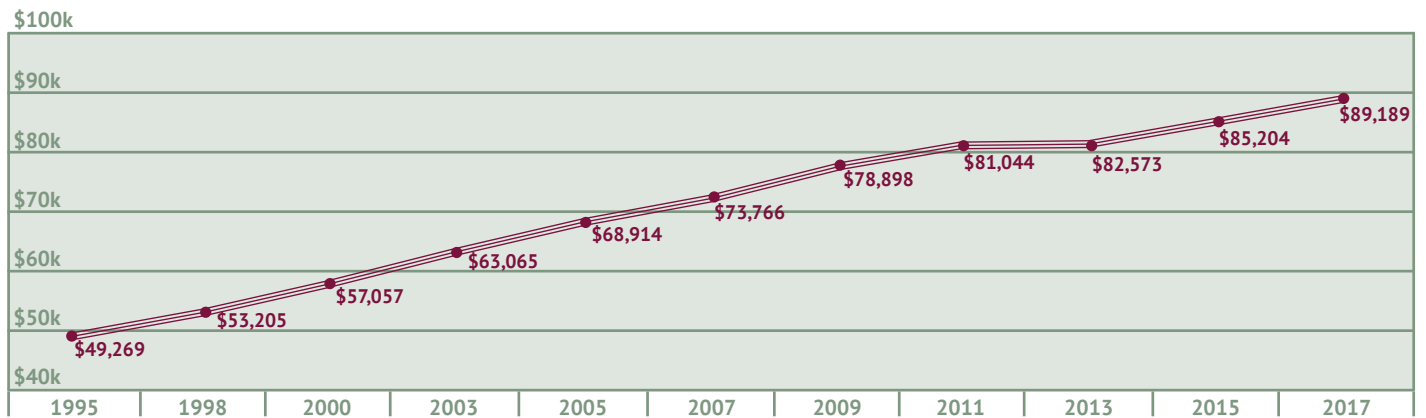
Turfgrass itself is environmentally friendly as it filters pollutants from runoff from neighboring properties, provides oxygen/sequesters carbon, provides for cooler temperatures in urban environments and provides ground cover preventing erosion. Golf provides many social benefits like recreation, socialization and jobs benefiting local economies. It also supports fundraising activities for many different causes including wildlife preservation, human issues, animal protection and environmental stewardship.

## BENEFITS OF THE PROFESSION

### EMPLOYER FRINGE BENEFITS



### SUPERINTENDENT SALARIES



## PREPARATION FOR A CAREER AS A GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT

Golf facilities are complex business operations. Superintendents need much more than just technical ability. Formal education in plant sciences, landscaping, business management, personnel administration and public relations is essential.

Students pursuing a career as a golf course superintendent complete courses covering both business and landscaping aspects of course management. Over 100 colleges and universities across the country offer certificate, bachelor's or associate's degree programs in golf course and turfgrass management. GCSAA



superintendents also are encouraged to learn to play the game of golf.

*For more information about education and curriculum, scan this QR code.*



## ABOUT GCSAA

Since 1926, GCSAA has been the top professional association for the men and women who manage golf courses in the United States and worldwide. From its headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas, the association provides education, information and representation to more than 17,000 members in more than 75 countries. The GCSAA's mission is to serve its members, advance their profession and enhance the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf.

Even after attaining a degree, continuing education is critical for keeping current on the advancements in management practices, regulations, new turfgrasses and equipment. The GCSAA has set certain levels of competencies for association superintendents' varying career paths and provides comprehensive continuing education for members to achieve their goals.

*To find out more about the profession and see if this is the career for you, contact a superintendent at a nearby golf course and consider working there, or visit [gcsaa.org](http://gcsaa.org) for more information.*



[WWW.GCSAA.ORG](http://WWW.GCSAA.ORG)

