

# DEEP SOUTH TURF EXPO • OCTOBER 28 – 30, 2025 • BILOXI, MS

# 2025 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

4 pm – 6 pm	Large Equipment Move-In	Mississippi Coast Convention Center (MCCC) – E4
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## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

8 am – 4 pm	Registration Open	MCCC – Foyer
8 am – 4 pm	Registration Open & Exhibitor Move-In	MCCC – E4
9 am – 3:30 pm	Alabama Ornamental & Turf Exam Review	MCCC – D3
11 am	Scramble Golf Tournament	The Preserve Golf Club
5 pm	<b>Tailgate Celebration – <i>All attendees &amp; exhibitors welcome!</i></b> <b>Shuttle Schedule to Tailgate:</b> Bus leaves The Beau Rivage (from the bus lobby) to The Preserve at 3:30 pm, 4:30 pm, 5:30 pm, 6:30 pm Bus leaves The Preserve (from the front loop) to The Beau Rivage at 5:00 pm, 6:00pm, 7:00 pm, 8:00 pm	The Preserve Golf Club

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

7 am – 4 pm	Registration Open	MCCC – Foyer
7 am	Continental Breakfast	MCCC – Foyer
8 – 11 am	General Session: Keynote Speakers	MCCC – D5-8

### GENERAL SESSION

8 am	<b>Disease Detection and Control: Best Practices for Southern Turfgrass Systems</b> • <i>Dr. Wendell Hutchins, University of Arkansas</i> Accurate disease diagnosis and timely intervention are essential for maintaining healthy, high-quality turf in the south's challenging climate. In this session, we'll present current strategies for identifying and managing major turfgrass diseases affecting warm-season grasses, including large patch, spring dead spot, and more. Attendees will learn how to distinguish between similar symptoms, select effective fungicides, optimize application timing, and implement sustainable disease management practices. The session emphasizes integrating chemical and cultural controls into a comprehensive integrated pest management approach to reduce reliance on pesticides while maintaining effective disease suppression.
9 am	<b>We Thought You Was a Nematode! Understanding and Managing Turfgrass Nematodes</b> • <i>Dr. Joe Roberts, Clemson University</i> Nematodes are often the hidden culprits behind turf decline, mimicking symptoms of other pests, nutrient issues, or disease. In this session, we'll demystify turfgrass nematodes by covering their identification, biology, and economic impact on warm-season grasses common across the south. Attendees will learn how to accurately diagnose nematode damage, interpret soil assay results, and select appropriate chemical and cultural control strategies. The session emphasizes responsible nematicide use, label compliance, and integrating nematode management by offering practical guidance for turf managers looking to detect and manage nematodes before they cause serious damage.
10 am	<b>Irrigation Management and Water Quality in a Changing Environment</b> • <i>Dr. Ben Wherley, Texas A&amp;M University</i> Efficient irrigation and water quality management are more important than ever as environmental conditions shift and regulatory scrutiny increases. In this session, we'll explore the connection between irrigation practices, turfgrass health, and pest pressure in warm-season turf systems common throughout the Deep South. Attendees will learn how poor irrigation can contribute to increased disease and weed incidence, and how proper scheduling, soil moisture monitoring, and water quality adjustments can improve pesticide efficacy and reduce unnecessary applications. The session will emphasize the role of irrigation management in promoting healthier turf that is more resilient to pests and less reliant on chemical controls.
11 am	<b>Surviving the Shade: Managing Warm-Season Turfgrass in Low-Light Conditions</b> • <i>Dr. Eric DeBoer, Louisiana State University</i> Shade stress is a major challenge in warm-season turfgrass management, often leading to thinning turf, increased disease pressure, and higher reliance on chemical controls. In this session, we'll discuss how limited light availability affects turf health, pest susceptibility, and pesticide performance. Topics will include cultivar selection for shade tolerance, mowing and fertility adjustments, and disease prevention strategies tailored to low-light environments. Attendees will gain practical guidance on how to maintain playable, healthy turf under shade while minimizing pesticide inputs through improved cultural practices.

12 pm – 4 pm	<b>Tradeshow Open Opening</b>	MCCC – E4
	<b>Be sure to take advantage of all activities offered during the tradeshow</b>	
	11 am – 2:30 pm Silent Auction (must pay and pick-up items by Thursday morning)	
	11 am – 4 pm Hole Challenge Contest – <i>visiting all participating sponsors</i>	
	11 am – 4 pm Weed ID Contest	
	12 pm Lunch	
	12 – 3pm Corn Hole Tournament	
	12 – 3pm Beer & Wine Cash Bar	
	<b>Association Business Meetings</b>	
	12 pm Alabama Turfgrass Research Foundation Business Meeting	MCCC – D3
	1 pm Alabama Turfgrass Association Business Meeting	MCCC – D3
	1 pm Mississippi Turfgrass Association Business Meeting	MCCC – D4
	2 pm Louisiana-Mississippi GCSA Business Meeting	MCCC – D4
3 pm – 5 pm	General Session: Keynote Speakers	MCCC – D5-8

### GENERAL SESSION

3 pm	<b>Battle of the Bots: Integrating Robotics and Technology for Smarter Turf Management</b> • <i>Dr. Scott McElroy, Auburn University</i> Emerging robotic technologies are revolutionizing turf management by improving precision in pesticide applications, monitoring pest populations, and reducing labor demands. In this session, we'll explore how autonomous and semi-autonomous "bots" can be effectively integrated into pest and disease management programs on golf courses, sports fields, and commercial turf. Attendees will learn about the capabilities of robotic sprayers, sensor-guided weed control, and data-driven decision-making tools that enhance pesticide efficacy while minimizing environmental impact. The session emphasizes best practices for calibration, application timing, and adherence to label requirements within an IPM framework, offering practical insights for turf managers seeking innovative solutions to optimize pest control and reduce chemical inputs.	
4 pm	<b>Developing and Training Tomorrow's Turfgrass Professionals: Building a Skilled and Safe Workforce</b> • <i>Will Arnett, Larry Cagle, Keair Edwards, L.J. Robinson and Moderator: Dr. Dave Han</i> The future of turfgrass management depends on a well-trained, knowledgeable workforce. Join this dynamic discussion led by moderator Dave Han and industry leaders as they explore effective strategies for recruiting, developing, and training the next generation of turfgrass professionals. Topics will include workforce development, cultivating a strong work ethic, career growth, skill-building and fostering pride in quality turf management. Attendees will learn how to build training programs that not only develop skills but also encourage loyalty and a deep commitment to craftsmanship that will sustain and strengthen the turf industry for years to come.	
5 pm	<b>Alabama Pesticide Sign-out</b>	<b>MCCC – E4</b>
4 – 6 pm	<b>Tradeshow Closing – <i>exhibitors are not allowed to move out until 4pm</i></b> <b>Dinner on your own</b>	<b>MCCC – E4</b>

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

7 am – 8 am	Registration Open				MCCC – Foyer
7 am – 9 am	Exhibitor Move-out				MCCC – E4
7 am	Continental Breakfast				MCCC – Foyer
8 am – 12 pm	Breakout Sessions				
	<b>Golf Sessions</b> MCCC – D1 & 2	<b>Sports Turf &amp; Grounds Sessions</b> MCCC – D9 & 10	<b>Lawn Care &amp; Landscape Sessions</b> MCCC – D11 & 12	<b>Sod Production Sessions</b> MCCC – D3	
8 am	<b>Diseases and Nematodes of Putting Greens</b> <i>Dr. Aaron Tucker, Auburn University</i> This presentation provides an overview of key diseases and plant-parasitic nematodes affecting putting greens across diverse climates and turfgrass species. Emphasis will be placed on diagnosis, seasonal trends, and emerging threats, including fungicide resistance and nematode pressure under intensively managed conditions. Integrated management strategies will be discussed to support healthier playing surfaces and long-term turf performance.	<b>Proactive Play: Integrated Disease Management for Bermudagrass and Overseeded Sports Fields</b> <i>Dr. Wendell Hutchins, University of Arkansas</i> In the Southern U.S., managing disease in bermudagrass and overseeded sports fields requires a proactive, region-specific approach. This session focuses on key turfgrass diseases such as spring dead spot, leaf spot, and Pythium, with an emphasis on preventative strategies that align with integrated pest management principles. Attendees will learn how to monitor environmental conditions, optimize cultural practices like mowing, irrigation, and fertility, and time fungicide applications to reduce reliance on curative treatments. By implementing these science-based tactics, turf managers can maintain safer, healthier playing surfaces.	<b>Know Your Enemy: Identifying and Managing Pathogens in Warm-Season Lawns</b> <i>Dr. Joe Roberts, Clemson University</i> Warm-season lawns are highly susceptible to a range of turfgrass pathogens that can quickly impact turf health, appearance, and client satisfaction. In this session, we'll guide lawn care professionals through the accurate identification of common fungal diseases such as large patch, take-all root rot, and dollar spot in warm-season grasses like bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, and St. Augustinegrass. The session will cover disease life cycles, environmental conditions that promote outbreaks, and best practices for selecting and applying fungicides. Emphasis will be placed on integrating these treatments into a broader Integrated Pest Management program that includes proper mowing, irrigation, fertility, and cultural practices.	<b>From Bare Fields to Better Sod: Can Cover Crops Boost Sod Farm Success?</b> <i>Dr. Eric DeBoer, Louisiana State University</i> Cover crops are gaining traction as a sustainable tool to improve soil health, reduce erosion, and enhance nutrient cycling—but how do they fit in to sod production systems? In this session, we'll explore the latest research on using cover crops during fallow periods to support more vigorous sod establishment and long-term field productivity. This session offers practical insights for producers interested in improving sod quality, protecting soil resources, and enhancing overall farm sustainability.	
9 am	<b>New Technology for Weed Control</b> <i>Dr. Jay McCurdy, Mississippi State University</i> Precision application tools and next-generation herbicide formulations are transforming how superintendents manage weeds on the golf course. This session highlights cutting-edge technologies, including site-specific, AI-enabled weed detection and novel chemistry—that enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and sustainability of herbicide use. Attendees will learn how these innovations can reduce chemical inputs, combat herbicide resistance, and strengthen integrated weed management strategies for today's turf-grass challenges.	<b>Natural vs. Synthetic: Choosing the Right Turf for the Game</b> <i>Mark Langner, Pro Turf Serv</i> When it comes to sports fields, the choice between natural and synthetic turf isn't just about aesthetics—it's about performance, safety, long-term maintenance, and environmental impact. This session offers a balanced, in-depth look at both options. Attendees will explore how field surface decisions influence weed, insect, and disease pressures, and how natural grass fields require ongoing pest management strategies to maintain safe, playable conditions. Discussion will include how synthetic surfaces may reduce or shift pesticide use but come with their own environmental and maintenance considerations.	<b>Weeds Under Control: Herbicide Strategies and Solutions</b> <i>Dr. Scott McElroy, Auburn University</i> Weed management remains one of the most challenging and pesticide-reliant aspects of lawn care. In this interactive session, we'll tackle real-world weed control questions, covering everything from accurate weed identification to herbicide selection, resistance management, and seasonal application timing. The session will highlight best practices for label compliance, minimizing non-target impacts, and integrating cultural and chemical strategies within an IPM framework. Attendees will gain practical insights on reducing herbicide failures, managing hard-to-control species, and making environmentally responsible application decisions emphasizing proper herbicide use and sustainable weed control strategies in warm-season turfgrass systems.	<b>Seasonal Labor Solutions for Sod Producers</b> <i>Zach and Merritt Harris, C.O.C. Placement Service</i> Finding and retaining a reliable seasonal workforce is a growing challenge for sod producers—and the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers Program offers both opportunities and complexities. This session breaks down what you need to know to successfully use H-2A, including application timelines, compliance requirements, housing and wage standards, and recent regulatory updates. Learn how to avoid common pitfalls and keep your operation running smoothly through peak demand seasons.	
10 am	<b>Strategies for Successful Greens Establishment</b> <i>Dr. Barry Stewart, Mississippi State University</i> Establishing new greens following new construction or renovation is a challenge. The goal is to create a resilient turf system that supports long-term soil and turf with fewer inputs. This session covers best practices for greens grow-in with a focus on soil selection/preparation, cultivar selection, fertility programs, irrigation strategies, and other inputs that improve overall turf vigor.	<b>Fungicides &amp; Field Health: Managing Turfgrass Diseases in Southern Sports Fields</b> <i>Dr. Aaron Tucker, Auburn University</i> Southern sports fields face intense disease pressure due to high heat, humidity, and extended growing seasons. This session focuses on identifying and managing common turfgrass diseases in the Southeast—including spring dead spot, large patch, and leaf spot in both bermudagrass and overseeded fields. We'll discuss effective fungicide selection, application timing, resistance management, and label compliance. The session emphasizes integrating fungicides into a broader Integrated Pest Management strategy that includes sound cultural practices such as irrigation management, mowing height adjustments, and fertility planning.	<b>Grow Like a Pro: Turf Fertilization Tips that Deliver</b> <i>Dr. Beth Guertal, Auburn University</i> Unlock the full potential of your turf with fertilization strategies that are proven to perform. This session dives into the science and timing behind effective nutrient applications, helping you deliver greener, healthier lawns that are more resilient to pest, weed, and disease pressures. Emphasis will be placed on how proper fertility supports integrated pest management by enhancing turf vigor and minimizing environmental conditions that favor pests.	<b>Farmer Roundtable: Markets, Equipment, and More</b> <i>Moderator: Wayne Bassett</i> Join fellow sod producers for a candid, interactive roundtable discussion on the challenges and opportunities shaping today's turfgrass industry. This session will cover real-world insights on current market trends, pricing pressures, labor issues, and equipment innovations—from harvesters and spriggers to irrigation and cultivation tools. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences, ask questions, and exchange ideas about what's working (and what's not) on their farms. Whether you're looking to expand acreage, update your fleet, or navigate shifting customer demands, this session offers valuable peer-to-peer learning you can take straight back to the field.	
11 am	<b>Smarter Irrigation for Healthier Turf</b> <i>Dr. Ben Wherley, Texas A&amp;M University</i> Efficient irrigation is the cornerstone of great turf—and great water management starts with strategy, not guesswork. This session dives into modern irrigation practices that help superintendents optimize water use without compromising playability or turf health. Learn how to integrate weather data, soil moisture sensors, mapping tools, and system audits to fine-tune your watering approach while placing an emphasis on the role of irrigation in integrated pest management including how proper moisture management can reduce turfgrass disease incidence, limit weed encroachment, and minimize pesticide inputs.	<b>PGRs and Robotics for Improved Turfgrass Management</b> <i>Dr. Scott McElroy and Lucas Nunes, Auburn University</i> This session highlights the combined use of plant growth regulators (PGRs) and autonomous mowers to enhance turfgrass management across a range of environments and management intensities. Observations from research trials and real-world implementations around the world will be presented, illustrating how robotic mowing platforms influence turfgrass quality, mowing frequency, and weed pressure. The role of PGRs in regulating growth, improving surface uniformity, and extending mowing intervals will be discussed in the context of automated maintenance. Emphasis will be placed on integrating these technologies as part of a sustainable, labor-efficient approach to turfgrass care.	<b>BMPs in Action: Protecting Lawns, Landscapes, and the Environment</b> <i>Dr. Bryan Unruh, University of Florida</i> Implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) is essential for sustainable lawn and landscape care—and for meeting pesticide regulatory standards. In this session, we'll outline science-based BMPs that directly support effective pest, weed, and disease control while protecting water quality and non-target organisms. Topics will include proper pesticide storage and handling, application timing, equipment calibration, drift reduction, and how fertility, irrigation, and mowing practices impact pest pressure. Attendees will also learn how to incorporate these practices into an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy that promotes healthier turf with fewer chemical inputs.	<b>Targeted Spraying Systems: Precision Tools for Smarter Sod Production</b> <i>Amy Wilber, Mississippi State University</i> Precision matters—especially when it comes to effective and responsible pesticide application. In this session, we'll explore the latest advancements in targeted spraying systems designed to improve accuracy, reduce chemical waste, and increase operational efficiency on sod farms. Learn how sensor-based and site-specific technologies can help detect and treat only affected areas, reducing overall pesticide use while maintaining high-quality turf. The session will cover calibration, system selection, and integration with existing farm equipment providing practical tools and insights to modernize your spray program.	
12 pm	<b>CEU &amp; Pesticide Sign-out and Expo Adjournment</b> Pesticide recertification points for Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee – CEUs for GCSAA, CCA, PGMS and ASBA				MCCC – Foyer