



The Great Value of a Turfgrass-Related Degree

WHEN you get to the point where you have more career behind you than you do ahead of you, you gain a little perspective on what has served you well and what hasn't. For example, I can say — without hesitation — that my Bachelor of Science degree from Colorado State University in landscape horticulture/turfgrass management has served me well.

I would recommend a degree in turfgrass science (or related degree) from any of our many great land grant universities to any young man or woman. It'll serve you very well within several economic growth sectors. After all, this is the U.S., and we will always love our competitive sports. The multibillion dollar a year sports industry continues to flourish (in many aspects, not just financial) and the industry not only needs fields managers, it needs scientifically literate young men and women in all areas. A university turfgrass degree will allow you to compete for good jobs anywhere in the growing agricultural industry. A knowledge in soils will help you stay steps ahead of problems you'll encounter.

I fully understand that the university experience is different today than when I attended back in the early 1980s, especially the relative costs. But I also believe some of the basic benefits to a university degree in turfgrass (or related



A university student is pushed out of his or her comfort zones every day, in all aspects. This is where you find the character and grit that will serve you well in your career. Included are 16-week courses and labs with competency tests in chemistry, biology, botany, horticulture, agriculture, soil science, physics, computer technology, business and math, along with many other classes that may not seem relevant at the time, but will *in* time. Looking over my 32-year-old transcripts, I realize I received a fantastic STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education decades before it was in vogue. These are generally applied science degrees and specialized professional degrees and will serve you well as a platform to excel in almost any field of technology. These types of degrees can be applied to many different career paths. Most programs require an internship and graduates come out with usable skills. You'll be scientifically literate, and that will be increasingly crucial to success in the 21st-century economies.

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I'm still surprised at how much of my curriculum I can recall after all these years. Last December, I ran into my old landscape plant professor from Colorado State at the Rocky Mountain Turfgrass Conference. I told him how I somehow maintained memory of most of the 300-some woody landscape plants he had taught us, and I challenged him to stump me 32 years later on one of the Latin names. "OK, let's see, Golden Rain Tree?" he asked. "*Koelreuteria paniculata*," I replied.

I nailed it!

You'll make and have more friends at a university than in any part of your life. Some of these will become lifelong friends and colleagues. You'll gain important industry associations, not least of which is your university and the department you get your degree through. It's a solid and broad foundation to build your career on.

I know many great athletic field managers that don't possess university "turf" degrees, but I don't know a single degreed athletic field manager that regrets their university degree. They're well connected in the industry and back to their alma mater. They'll always have professional opportunities.

They also work at some of the coolest, most challenging and rewarding outdoor jobs you could imagine. **SFM**

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sciences) are unchanged, even as campus environments and the students themselves may have changed significantly.

That happens every generation, I suppose.

More specifically, a degreed turfgrass professional can compete at all levels of the turfgrass, golf and athletic field management industries.