



TURFGRASS

Field to provide lab to research new technologies

Lawn and garden scientists and specialists with Texas AgriLife Research and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are getting a new turfgrass facility. The 50-acre turfgrass field laboratory, future home of the Scotts Miracle-Gro Lawn and Garden Research Facility, is being developed at the 600-acre Agricultural and Environmental Life Sciences Center on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station.

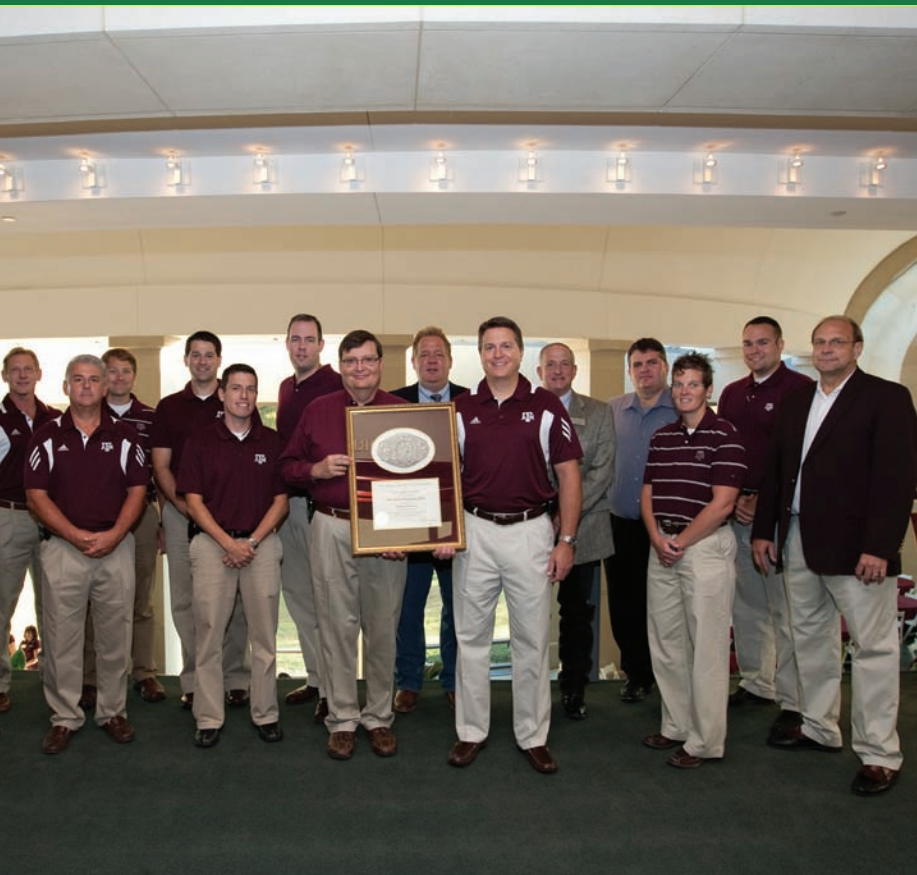
Dr. David Baltensperger, head of the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, said AgriLife Research scientists and AgriLife Extension specialists from his department and from the Departments of Entomology; Horticultural Sciences; Plant Pathology and Microbiology; and Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences will use the field lab. Much of the soil and crop sciences research will focus on how different turfgrass varieties, soil amendments, and fertilizers impact water use and water quality, he said.

“We will be looking at many water management issues that are important in the state of Texas,” Baltensperger said. “There are no other facilities with this capacity in the world.”

Dr. Richard White, soil and crop sciences professor of turfgrass physiology and management, said some of the turfgrass research plots will replicate irrigation treatments, fertilizer treatments, or cultivation treatments to determine if any reduce water use. “We want to develop systems that contribute to reduced water consumption while maintaining healthy lawns,” he said.

One of the current projects, in collaboration with the Gulf Coast Irrigation Association and municipal water districts in northeast and northwest Houston, looks at two different grasses and three different water delivery systems. Project members will use information gained from this project to develop educational materials for that area’s home consumers, he said. ➔

Image created by Mary-Margaret Shread, AgriLife Communications.




(Left) Dr. Mark Hussey, vice chancellor and dean for agriculture and life sciences at Texas A&M University, and Jim Bates, Scotts Company southwest region president, are joined by others showing a recognition plaque given to the Scotts Company. Photo courtesy of Texas A&M AgriLife.

In another section of the turfgrass field, the soil and crop sciences department is establishing turfgrass plots with 24 automated water samplers collecting runoff water to measure its quality.

“When these plots are completed, we will have the most substantial capacity to look at runoff water quality for turfgrass in the world,” White said.

Ground-breaking for the Scotts facility was in February 2011. The research facility is part of a long-term agreement among Texas A&M AgriLife, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M, and Scotts Miracle-Gro.

“This partnership will not only enhance our turfgrass research efforts, but strengthen our teaching of undergraduate and graduate students,” Baltensperger said. “After graduating from Texas A&M, these students will enter the industry with first-hand experience in learning how to solve complex issues with new and innovative technologies.”

Scotts is providing \$750,000 over five years to create the research facility through the Texas A&M Foundation. A separate agreement will provide funding for developing research programs. 

(Right) Dr. David Baltensperger and Dr. Richard White stand in front of the future Scotts Miracle-Gro Lawn and Garden Research Facility. Photo by Leslie Lee, Texas Water Resources Institute.

Some information in this story is from an AgriLife Today news release.