

EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
May 2010

Spotlight on Rutgers Turfgrass Program

The [Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science](#) is regarded as one of the premier research, teaching, and outreach institutions in the world. Rutgers turfgrass cultivars can be found everywhere from New York's Central Park to the White House and Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers.



In 2009, the center generated over \$4.3 million from turf seed royalties. Royalties from its partnership with over 18 private sector firms are used to support a variety of programs at the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station** (NJAES), including the Turfgrass Breeding Program as well as facilities and staff for several outlying research stations conducting research on turfgrass, ornamentals, and agronomic crops. In addition, royalties support a competitive grants program that funds research and outreach projects in several departments and centers throughout NJAES and the **School of Environmental and Biological Sciences**.

Over the past year, 40 new turf cultivars were released by the **Rutgers Turfgrass Breeding Program** for sale in the United States and abroad.

In addition, 29 U.S. Plant Variety Protection applications were submitted and 19 U.S. Plant Variety Protection Certificates were issued for Rutgers NJAES turfgrass cultivars. These turf cultivars received top honors in the most recent National Turfgrass Evaluation Trials, with 90% of the top 30 tall fescue, fine fescue, and perennial ryegrass entries, and 50% of the top 25 Kentucky bluegrass entries tracing their lineage back to the Rutgers Turfgrass Breeding Program.

The tremendous success of the turf breeding program stems, to a large extent, from the extensive germplasm collection trips that have been conducted by center faculty each year. Over the last year, turf breeders at Rutgers traveled to Italy, the Atlas Mountains, France, and Spain to collect over 1,800 germplasm sources of cool-season turfgrasses that will be used to develop future varieties.



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Impact of Turfgrass Program Leads to Career Changes

Supporting the science and research conducted by the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science and the outstanding success of the Rutgers Turfgrass Breeding Program is a robust outreach and education program in professional golf turf management offered by the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station' **Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE)**. A two-year certificate program, the OCPE course has an outstanding track record of success and boasts numerous alumni placed in high profile golf courses across the United States of America.

Meet three participants in the certificate program, all from New Jersey, who initiated career-changing moves after enrolling in the [Professional Golf Turf Management Certificate Program](#).

During a four-year tour with the Army, Torres married, had children, and relocated to Fort Dix in 2000. By then a mother of three, Torres opened a daycare facility on the base, but she always longed to be outside. A neighbor helped run the base's Fountain Green Golf Course. Hearing about his work intrigued Torres so much that she got a job operating a tractor on the course but she knew she lacked the skills and knowledge needed to advance in the profession. That's when Torres learned about the two-year Professional Golf Turf Management Certificate Program offered by the Rutgers [Office of Continuing Professional Education](#).



Jennifer Torres found her calling in the male-dominated golf industry and is now the assistant superintendent at Indian Springs Country Club.

Now in its 50th year, the intensive program involves two full-time, 10-week classroom sessions during the off-season, sandwiched around a 9-month paid golf course internship that minimizes the time students must live without a paycheck. The program is no-nonsense, teaching students all the essentials, including weeds, trees, grass, soils, irrigation, and golf course construction, said **Fran Koppell**, senior program coordinator. It also introduces students to the fundamental leadership skills, like management, budgeting and effective speaking, needed to help them rise through the ranks. Between 60 and 80 students graduate from the program each year and Rutgers uses its network to help students land jobs and assists them throughout their professional lives. The program draws students from just about every state and around the world.

Torres seized the opportunity to enter the male-dominated industry when she enrolled in the Rutgers turf program in 2004 – the only woman in that year's class. She used her G.I. Bill along with two scholarships to pay for the program: one from the New Jersey Turfgrass Association and the other from the Officer and Wives Club at Fort Dix, she said. Upon graduating, Torres became assistant superintendent at the Indian Springs Country Club, an 18-hole public course in Marlton. "Had I not gone to Rutgers, I would not be living up to the potential I have," said Torres, who lives in Brown Mills. "It definitely opened doors."

Although most graduates, like Torres, land jobs in assistant or superintendent positions at golf courses, others choose to work in related fields like grass seed sales, landscape management, and even more exciting ventures. One Rutgers graduate maintains the grounds inside NASCAR

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raceways and another is director of grounds for Pfizer Global Research and Development. But the golf course is where it's at for most and diehard fans set their sights high. Luckily for them, Rutgers alumni, like John Zimmers, have blazed the trail. Zimmers is the superintendent of Oakmont Country Club in Pennsylvania, eight-time host of the U.S. Open.



Arnold Kim left the fast-paced world of high finance to launch a career centered on his favorite pastime: golf.

One such golf fanatic and soon-to-be turf program graduate is **Arnold Kim**. He worked in the exciting, fast-paced world of high finance after graduating from Rutgers University but when the banking industry tanked in late 2008, Kim decided the time was right to pursue his real passion – golf. “I love golf and working every day on a golf course sounded pretty good,” said Kim, 28, who began playing the sport while still in grade school. He started his career shift in 2009, taking an entry-level position at the Bedens Brook Club in Skillman. His bosses encouraged him to enroll at Rutgers to quickly acquire the technical and management skills needed to advance in the industry. He is set to complete the program in fall 2010.

“The fast-paced nature of the program is highly efficient and direct, which I appreciate,” said Kim, who lives in Franklin Township, Somerset County. The certificate program is giving him “knowledge and credentials in an increasingly competitive industry.”

“Competitive” is a word that few understand as well as **Tim Christ**. After 4 years of playing college football (as co-captain of the Scarlet Knights), his dream of being a professional player came to an abrupt end when he was cut from the Eagles training camp. Christ had to quickly make a decision about his future. He liked the outdoors so a mentor suggested he look into the turf management program. Christ contacted **Ned Lipman**, the program director. On Lipman’s advice, Christ interviewed several golf course superintendents to learn about the job and landed a position at the Merion Golf Club outside Philadelphia before enrolling.



Tim Christ oversees 3 Essex County golf courses and manages over 100 employees at the height of the season.

Christ wasn’t terribly motivated as an undergraduate, but he took the turf class seriously. “I really buckled down and I wanted to learn everything I could,” Christ said. “I became the nerd I had never been.” Christ, 40, graduated from the program in 1995, went on to manage top courses and is now the Director of Golf Operations for Essex County, overseeing three public courses and managing 100 employees at the height of the season. “The Rutgers program teaches you what it takes to be successful in this field,” said Christ, who lives in Boonton Township with his wife and four children.

Not everyone is cut out for the career, which can require waking before dawn and doing very physical work for long hours, Koppell said. But for those like Christ, Torres, and Kim, who love golf and being outdoors, the Rutgers professional golf turfgrass management certificate program can turn a passion into a lifetime calling! Call 732-932-9271 or visit www.golfturf.rutgers.edu.



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Outreach Efforts: Public/Community Service

Sussex County Commercial Kitchen

Agricultural producers in New Jersey are interested in developing value-added products, such as jellies made from locally grown fruits, as such products can prolong the sales season for producers and potentially increase profits. While these value-added products show tremendous potential, few commercial kitchens are available to small-scale agricultural producers to develop their products combined with a lack of formal training to ensure that such products are produced in a safe and legal manner. Rutgers faculty, spearheaded by **Stephen Komar** (agricultural and resource management agent, Sussex County), initiated a pilot with the Sussex County Board of Agriculture, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and the Sussex County Technical School that will utilize a regional kitchen facility to produce these value-added agricultural products. The pilot program also aims to empower farmer partnerships and assist in the development, production, and marketing of value-added products as well as develop training materials to enable producers in other counties to conduct similar programs.

Middlesex County Master Gardeners Offer Helpline

Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Middlesex County has established a Master Gardeners helpline for county residents who may have questions regarding horticulture, entomology, and environmental stewardship. The helpline, 732-398-5220, is active Mondays through Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Middlesex County Master Gardeners are part of RCE of Middlesex County, headquartered at the EARTH Center at Davidson's Mill Pond Park, 42 Riva Avenue, in South Brunswick. To learn more about Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County, visit www.co.middlesex.nj.us/extensionservices.

New Jersey Flower and Garden Show

Nicholas Polanin (agricultural and resource management agent, Somerset County) and **Carolyn Morella** (administrative assistant) facilitated more than 80 Rutgers NJAES Master Gardeners from 10 county programs, who volunteered at the Rutgers tent at the 2010 New Jersey Flower and Garden Show in Edison, NJ. The volunteers manned the "Garden Helpline," an educational display, for three and a half days, amassing a total of 192 volunteer hours. In addition, Master Gardeners from Monmouth and Somerset counties were featured speakers in the Garden Seminars at the event.

NJLCA Landscape Trade Show and Conference

Joel Flagler (agricultural and resource management agent, Bergen County) coordinated and chaired the educational program of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA) Landscape Trade Show and Conference held on February 24 at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, in Rutherford, NJ. Over 1100 professionals attended this event, which is the largest one-day landscape trade show in the state that has served the landscape, turf, and nursery industry for 35 years. NJLCA started out as Bergen County Landscape Contractors Association and grew into a serious statewide organization, with enduring and strong linkages and cooperation with RCE and NJAES. For the 23rd year, Flagler coordinated the event's educational conference, which featured NJDEP-accredited presentations, including **Steve Rettke** (agriculture program associate, Camden County).



Mark Your Calendars!

Bee-ginner's Beekeeping

WHEN: June 3–5, 2010, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE: Various locations.

WHAT: A two and a half-day program is designed to provide the necessary information needed for new beekeepers to start and care for a honey bee colony.

MORE INFO: Contact Dalynn Knigge, 732-932-9271, ext. 622, knigge@njaes.rutgers.edu.
<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ae0401cc.html>

Christmas Tree Twilight Management Program

WHEN: June 6, 2010, 6 p.m.

WHERE: Yuletide Christmas Tree Farm, 138 Evergreen Road, New Egypt, NJ.

WHAT: Sponsored by the NJ Christmas Tree Growers Association and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the meeting will include discussions on species selection, weed management, insect and disease control, erosion control practices, deer issues and marketing.

MORE INFO: Call 732-932-8993, ext. 14.

http://events.rutgers.edu/pdfs/xmas_twilight_program_060810.pdf

Master Gardeners Advanced Training & Garden Helpline Program

WHEN: June 11, 2010, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

WHERE: County College of Morris, Sheffield Hall, 214 Center Grove Road, Randolph, NJ.

WHAT: Advanced training presentations will include summertime turfgrass diseases, the pros and cons of soil tillage, and diseases of commonly grown vegetables, among other topics.

MORE INFO: Contact Nick Polanin, 908-526-6293, ext. 2535.

Sustainable Twilight Tree Fruit & Wine Grape Research Meeting, Tour & Picnic

WHEN: June 22, 2010, 5:15 p.m. to 9 p.m.

WHERE: Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center, 121 Northville Road, Bridgeton, NJ.

WHAT: Meeting sponsored by Rutgers Cooperative Extension and NJ State Horticultural Society.

MORE INFO: Contact Jerome Frecon, 856-307-6450, ext. 1.

2010 Nursery Disease Control Meeting

WHEN: June 24, 2010, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

WHERE: Johnson Farms Nursery, 1686 Highway 77, Deerfield, NJ.

WHAT: The meeting will cover New Jersey Pesticide Applicator Units 1-Core, 2 -PP2, and 2-3A.

MORE INFO: Contact Jim Johnson, 856-451-2800.

For even more information of these calendar items and other events hosted and facilitated by Rutgers University, please visit the Rutgers Calendar at <http://ruevents.rutgers.edu/events/>.

This report is produced by the Office of Communications. For information or to provide comments, please contact Paula Walcott-Quintin at quintin@aesop.rutgers.edu or 732-932-7000, ext. 4204.

