

Quarterly ATRF Update – February 2025

As Canadian superintendents and staff return from the GCSAA conference in San Diego, it's a fitting time to acknowledge our generous sponsor for reaching a significant milestone in supporting student experiences. Since 2015, Syngenta Canada and Mr. Jason Steadwell have enabled Olds College turf students to compete on an international stage at the GCSAA Turf Bowl. In 2025, Syngenta has officially contributed \$50,000 to Olds College students, creating a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compete against top turf schools such as Rutgers, Purdue, and Penn State. Representing Syngenta, Olds College, and Canadian turf managers on an international stage is both an honor and a privilege.

With 77 teams and 304 students competing this year, the Olds College team placed 15th—just 22 points away from first place. The top ten teams were separated by a mere 17 points, highlighting the fierce competition. Notably, Syngenta also sponsors the University of Guelph, reinforcing their deep commitment to educating and inspiring the next generation of Canadian superintendents. Our deepest thanks for their unwavering support.

Olds College Turf Bowl Team 2025

Left to Right: William Hollins, Sam Anstey, Travis Neidleiski, Andrew Smiley



PTRC Winter Update

It has been a cold winter at the Prairie Turfgrass Research Center (PTRC), with minimal snow cover. As of February 9th, we have less than six inches of snow on the turf plots, and we anticipate some winterkill of *Poa annua*. This season has seen a gradual decline in temperatures, a stark contrast to the last two years, where October temperatures remained in the low 20s (°C). This year's conditions were more favorable for plant hardening, allowing for a proper transition from photosynthesis to respiration. These shifting weather patterns underscore the critical need for greens cover and insulation research.



We are pleased to announce the launch of a new 2025 project, ***"Influences on the Survivability of Poa annua Under Forced & Reduced Hardening Periods."*** Generously supported by GreenJacket Inc., BrettYoung, IRIT Canada, Olds College, and the Ontario Turf Research Foundation, this study will assess strategies to mitigate fall anoxia. Utilizing standard temperature and moisture sensing, as well as UV radiation analysis with sub-tarp spectrometers and O₂/CO₂ sensors, we aim to deepen our understanding of the variables affecting hardening and optimize covering systems for climate resilience.

A sincere thank you to our sponsors for making this research possible.



ATRF Research & Industry Engagement

February marks the final quarter of our ATRF fiscal year, providing an opportunity to reflect on winter research and prepare for the upcoming season. The speaking circuit is in full swing, with ATRF engagements at the Alberta Golf Superintendents meeting in Canmore, the Western Canada Turf Association in Richmond, BC, the University of Guelph in Ontario, and the Manitoba Golf Superintendents Association. Financially, ATRF remains strong, generating income for its own projects as well as investing \$8,000 in external turf research with membership to the Canadian Turfgrass Research Foundation, and project *'Influence of nitrogen rate on growing degree day models for plant growth regulator re-application interval on annual bluegrass putting greens'* under Dr. Charles Schmid at Oregon State..

Our collaborative project with the City of Calgary and the Sod Growers Commodity Group continues to yield valuable insights. The drought avoidance trial has highlighted the significant impact of over- and under watering on Yard Smart garden perennials. Meanwhile, the sod trials—comprising 48 experimental units across eight species and blends, each replicated four times—are showing promising early results.

Some key takeaways include:

- Turfgrass requires **34L/sqm** to establish and an equivalent amount to recover from dormancy.
- Selected turfs demonstrated active growth and photosynthesis with as little as **12L H₂O/sqm per week**.
- Following field capacity, turfgrass can survive up to **five weeks before entering early-stage dormancy**.
- Compared to perennials, turfgrass appears more tolerant under these drought conditions.



Additionally, we are expanding our project list with A-List Sustainable Turf, growing 48 varieties of ryegrass alongside 48 varieties of fescue in an NTEP-standard study. Our ongoing fungicide trials with Belchim and Syngenta continue both on-site and off-site, providing valuable data on disease resistance and treatment effectiveness. Given ATRF's exposure to harsher winter conditions due to open snow cover, we are actively comparing notes with researchers to evaluate winter survival strategies.



Save the Date – ATRF Field Day 2025

We are excited to announce that our **Biennial Field Day at Olds College** will take place in the **third week of August 2025**. Attendees can expect:

- Equipment demonstrations
- Commercial displays
- Research project walkthroughs
- CEU points
- A catered lunch, all under the big top at the Prairie Turfgrass Research Center

More details and registration information will follow soon, along with 2025 membership renewal updates. Thank you all for your continued support



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