

# Turfgrass Industry Facts in Georgia

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## **Benefits of Turfgrass.**

Turfgrasses are the primary vegetative covers on airports, athletic fields, cemeteries, churches, commercial buildings, golf courses, home lawns, schools, parks, and roadsides. While turfgrasses are typically thought of for recreation and aesthetic value, they also provide a valuable environmental service by preventing soil erosion from wind and rain, reducing runoff from rainfall, improving soil absorption of and infiltration of water, remediation of contaminated or polluted water, fire abatement, and other beneficial environmental impacts. Additionally, turfgrass are an integral component of the landscape that positively influences human behavior characteristics like improved ability to concentrate and self-discipline.

## **Turfgrass Industry Size.**

To determine the size of the turfgrass industry in Georgia a survey was conducted in 2010 with results analyzed and published in 2012. The turfgrass and related industries contribute \$7.8 billion annually to Georgia's economy, generating over \$1 billion annually to federal, state, and local tax revenues. This industry accounts for 87,000 full- and part-time jobs, the majority related to landscape maintenance. For a copy of the survey visit [www.GeorgiaTurf.com](http://www.GeorgiaTurf.com) and click on "2010 Turfgrass Industry Survey" in the *Industry* link. Other estimates suggest that at 1.8 million acres, turfgrass is clearly one of the largest agricultural commodities in the state.

## **Home Lawns.**

It is estimated there are greater than 1.25 million acres of home lawns in Georgia. In 2006, homeowners across Georgia spent about \$2.77 billion annually to maintain their lawns, labor accounted for 35% of the spending. Greater than 60% of homeowners employed fertilization and weed control practices. Generally, lawns represent the largest segment based on acreage of the industry.

## **Professional Landscape and Turfgrass Industry.**

Based on the 2006 UGA survey, the professional turfgrass and landscape industry had annual economic impact of \$3.7 billion and employed greater than 13,000 people.

## **Golf Course Industry.**

Based on a 2010 report commissioned by GOLF 20/20 for the Georgia Allied Golf Council and prepared by SRI International, the size of Georgia's direct golf economy was approximately \$2.4 billion. Golf brings visitors to the state, drives new construction and residential development, generates retail sales, and creates demand for goods and services.

When the total economic impact of Georgia's golf-related activities is considered, the golf industry generated approximately \$5.1 billion of direct, indirect, and induced economic output, \$1.5 billion of wage income, and 56,922 jobs.

## **Sod Production Industry.**

The 2014 Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development Farm Gate Value Report compiled by the University of Georgia reported nearly 24,562 acres used for producing sod/stolons. The farm gate value was \$104.3 million, a 15% increase from 2013. The sale represents only the first step in turfgrass's use. After being installed it is maintained for an indefinite period which further contributes to the State's economy. In 2016, the Georgia Crop Improvement Association ([www.GeorgiaCrop.com](http://www.GeorgiaCrop.com)) reported 7,530 acres of certified grass in production which is a 15% increase from 2015. This represents four warm-season species (bermudagrass, centipedegrass, seashore paspalum, and zoysiagrass) and one cool-season species (tall fescue). High quality turfgrasses which are true to variety also offer the end-consumer assurances they are getting the latest technology in turfgrass breeding.

## **Pesticide Use in Turf.**

The Georgia Department of Agriculture estimates that over 3,200 people have a commercial pesticide applicators license in Category 24 – Turf and Ornamentals. This is the largest group of commercial pesticide applicator license holders in Georgia. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences faculty hold numerous trainings each year for this group. License holders receive information on topics such as pesticide disposal and storage, safety, ground and surface water protection, non-chemical methods of pest control, and etc.

## **The University of Georgia Turfgrass Program.**

With over 60 years of providing scientifically based information, UGA scientists provide the research, development, and education for Georgia's turfgrass industry. UGA is known for its scientists and specialists developing practices, pest management strategies, and grasses that are best adapted to Georgia. Research and Extension efforts are directed towards developing and disseminating environmentally and economically sound best management practices to maintain a sound basis for the continued growth of this dynamic industry that impacts Georgia through jobs, goods/services, property values, tourism, and the quality of life in Georgia.