



New York State Turfgrass Association, Inc.

PO Box 612 • Latham, NY 12110
(518) 783-1229 • Fax (518) 783-1258
nysta@nysta.org • www.nysta.org

A Message From President Steve Whipple ...



What a year it has been! The weather seems to be ever changing and challenging for all of us and keeps us on our toes. Looking at this past year what comes to my mind, at least for my neck of the woods, is a see saw of extremes. We seem to have found ourselves with an extreme drought last season, followed by an extremely warm winter season with little to no snow, followed by a spring and summer of devastating thunderstorms and rain events. The see saw seems to be moving from one extreme to the other with very little to no balance in the middle. Where we go from here is anyone's guess but one thing is for sure, with the challenges we face in our daily work, it is as important now more than ever to utilize the resources offered by the associations that we are all a part of to help be successful in how we navigate these turbulent waters.

NYSTA has been hard at work this past year with numerous activities and initiatives that I am proud to share with you. First, we were able to secure \$175,000 from NYS for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. This ever-important funding is the vehicle by which we can enable needed projects to be executed for the benefit of our members and industry. This year we were able to fund continued BMP workshops through the New York Golf Course Foundation, annual meeting sponsorship for the NEGCSA and other state chapters, NYSDEC accredited webinars for this coming winter season, workforce development initiatives, and the upcoming NYSTA Education Day – Long Island.

Since 2020, NYSTA had taken a pause on in-person conferences, which had been one of the backbone business models of the association for many years. In fact, some of you probably remember the days when NYSTA hosted the Empire State Green Industry Show in Rochester and Syracuse that brought 1,600 plus people to view the latest in equipment, products, and education. I look fondly back on those days and wish that was still the case but as the industry changed, so did NYSTA's education delivery methodology shifting to regional conferences, bringing the education to the members, and reducing travel and time requirements. Since Covid, NYSTA leadership has been seeking and considering the next steps for in-person education delivery and it was decided that it is finally time to begin conferences once again. This year on November 30 we will ease back into in-person education with a day of seminars on Long Island as a good first step in this direction. Future conferences throughout the state will be predicated on the success of this first event and future funding/resources available to us. We are very excited and hopeful for a great event and hope there is more good news to report on as we look at our future with live events.

Workforce Development has taken a big step forward with final approval of our Apprenticeship Program through NYS. We received word mid-summer that the program can begin, and we are already in the planning stages of the roll out of this great and badly needed program for current turfgrass employees, and pathways for future interested employees. There will be much more on this

program as we move through the next few months of roll out. We are very excited at this new opportunity and believe this is a marquee initiative for our association.

One of NYSTA's main missions is to advocate on your behalf to our legislators in Albany on turfgrass related issues that affect our daily lives and profession. It takes a great deal of energy, time, and resource to continue to engage with our legislative bodies on a regular basis and find ways to create understanding on how legislative actions may affect us. Tom Kaplun, NYSTA Vice President, along with Bob Nielson, NYSTA Treasurer, work tirelessly as Government Relations Co-Chairs to continue the communication and advocacy efforts in Albany and do remarkable work on our behalf. The major issue pending at this time is a bill that would ban neonicotinoid products statewide. Products like Merrit would no longer be available for use if this bill is signed into law. Despite our best efforts the bill has already passed both the Assembly and Senate and is at the Governor's desk for consideration. Tom has worked incredibly hard this year speaking, writing letters and publications, and meeting with as many policy makers as possible to prevent the signing of this bill. We are hopeful that the governor takes time to consider and eventually veto this piece of legislation but without all of us engaging with the governor's office to hear our concerns, the chances of a veto are not as likely. We are extremely proud and lucky to have hard working people like Tom and Bob working on our behalf and a debt of gratitude is owed for their great efforts.

We have had significant change within the association this year as well with the retirement of our long time Executive Director Elizibeth Seme. It seems like just yesterday that she announced to us her desire to retire and enjoy the next steps of her life, but almost an entire year has passed since that change was made with our new Executive Director Sue VanAmburgh. As you all know working with Sue over the years, she is an incredibly hard working and efficient person, and we at NYSTA could not be happier with what she has been able to do for our association this past year. It is an honor and a privilege to work besides such a talented professional and I have greatly enjoyed our time working together on the business of the association.

I could go on forever talking about all the great things NYSTA is doing, and will be doing this next year but I will leave you with saying that the association is strong and getting stronger with all the great work that the NYSTA board and committees are engaged in. If any of you are interested in participating in all the work that we do, I encourage you to reach out and become involved. The work is greatly rewarding and impactful to so many in our industry and all of us who have been active at various levels of the association feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment in what we have done.

Thank you for your continued support of our association!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Whipple", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Whipple
NYSTA President