



Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Sod Production Apprenticeship Tasks

Developed in concert with the Wisconsin Sod Growers Association

Introduction:	The University of Wisconsin - Madison Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program (TAP) consists of a 12-week, in-person educational bootcamp and field-based apprenticeship at a turfgrass facility. Completion of the educational bootcamp is required prior to initiation of the apprenticeship. This document details the specific requirements related to completion of the apprenticeship for students interested in sod production. Successful completion of both the educational bootcamp and the apprenticeship is required to earn the Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program Certificate of Completion.
Requirements:	Apprentices must complete all of the tasks listed below and have their direct, on-site supervisor verify they have sufficiently completed each activity. These tasks were developed with input from the Wisconsin Sod Producers Association and are designed to approximate the skills expected of a new Assistant Farm Manager. Once the supervisor verifies completion they should sign and date to the right of each task listed below. Upon completion of all the tasks, the completed booklet can be presented to either Paul Koch or Doug Soldat in-person or by scanning and emailing the completed booklet to one of the instructors. Once the apprentice booklet has been received and documented by Paul or Doug a final Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program Certificate of Completion will be mailed to the student. Records of completion will be permanently kept on file by Paul Koch and Doug Soldat.
Documentation:	Daily journals and written reports are strongly encouraged, but not required, during the apprenticeship. Daily journals will help the apprentice keep record of task completion, facility operation, and professional skills obtained throughout the duration of the apprenticeship. The journal should be well organized and include regular documentation using photos and videos. Upon completion of the apprenticeship the journal can be transformed into a portfolio to be used when applying for future job opportunities and differentiate the apprentice's experience from other applicants.

Contact Information: If you have any questions regarding any of the apprenticeship tasks on this list or anything related to the apprenticeship program, please contact either Doug Soldat or Paul Koch. We hope you have a great experience during your apprenticeship!

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List of Apprenticeship Tasks for Sod Production



OUTSIDE OPERATIONS

<i>Safety</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Review and follow safety training for forklifts, tractors, power takeoff shafts, skid steers, harvesters, etc.		
Review/summarize farm SDS binder, Right to Know station.		
Review/summarize farm first aid and fire suppression.		
Review/summarize safety equipment provided at the sod farm.		

<i>Planting</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Operate a piece of equipment to till soil.		
Learn proper seed bed preparation in different soil types.		

<i>Fertilizing</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Acquire proper training necessary to correctly fertilize a sod field. This may include understanding fertilizer spreader settings, using GPS steering, accurately performing acreage measurement, etc.		
Perform a soil and water test utilizing proper soil sampling techniques.		
Calculate fertilizer needs for seed establishment, grow-in and maintenance.		
Following proper training, set spreader, load and apply fertilizer on a sod field. Document application.		
Review/report how fertilizer application records and inventory are maintained.		

<i>Irrigation</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Measure soil water content at different production stages (grow-in, at harvest, maintenance).		
Work with supervisor to setup, adjust and operate different irrigation systems. (Center pivots, hard hose or soft hose travelers, wheel lines or hand move.)		
Review/report how water use records are maintained.		

<i>Mowing</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Learn about mowing height, patterns, and equipment maintenance.		
Check and grease a mower.		
Operate a mower to mow a sod field.		
Use tractor GPS for steering.		

<i>Pest Control</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
View pesticide Worker Protection Training Video		
Review/report how pesticide records and inventory are maintained.		
Review pesticide storage and loading areas.		
Identify/diagnose 3 abiotic turf stress issues at your farm. Develop/document a maintenance plan to remedy each.		
Identify a turf-related issue at the sod farm and list the cultural corrective actions taken to resolve the problem.		
Following proper training, mix, load and spray a pesticide on a sod field surface.		
Review/report how pesticide application records are maintained.		

<i>Harvesting</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Cutting: Observe sod harvesting equipment, harvesting techniques, and learn to operate a harvester.		
Loading: Operate a forklift to haul pallets out of a field and load a truck.		
Deliveries i. Learn to properly secure a load. ii. Observe delivery fork operation. iii. Ride along with delivery driver and observe all procedures.		

<i>Installing</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
If a sod farm also installs sod, go on an installation project to learn soil prep and installation techniques.		

<i>Cover Crops</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Learn crop rotation basics and impact of different types of cover crops on sod production for typical rotation crops such as corn, beans, oats, etc.		

INSIDE OPERATIONS

<i>Office</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Learn/ observe all customer relations: phone, written communications, etc.		
Observe procedures and management for orders placed over the phone or internet.		
Review and provide summary of your farm's invoice/delivery processes. Note: apprentice should report only on processes. <u>Do not include any customer or company detail.</u>		
Payroll- record time keeping procedures.		

<i>Marketing and Sales</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Observe marketing outreach, including online communications and platforms used.		
If applicable, draft, get approval, and post an item of interest summarizing a project or event at your farm on social media. Include this with your journal.		

<i>Management Decisions</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Review and provide summary of your farm's operating and capital budget process.		

<i>Equipment Maintenance</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Review/report how equipment maintenance records are maintained.		
Review/report how equipment and parts inventory are maintained.		
Perform routine service on a piece of equipment (lubricant check/change, grease, height check and adjustment, tire pressure).		
Review/report your farm's equipment maintenance plan (preventative maintenance, service intervals, etc.).		

RELATIONSHIPS

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Observe supervisor methods of communication (face to face, text, two-way radio), demeanor and document effective communication methods.		
Organize and execute a staff team building event. (Examples: crew photo, cookout, safety training, recreational activity).		

<i>Customer</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Observe customer service techniques and application of company policy.		

<i>Owner/Farm Manager</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Observe traits for success, management style.		

<i>Vendor Relationships</i>	<i>Supervisor signature upon successful completion</i>	<i>Date</i>
Observe when and how products are ordered, inventory and records management.		

Additional Recommendations from the Wisconsin Sod Producers Association

- The goal of the field-based apprenticeship is exposure to the various sod farming activities listed above. Interest and time will dictate the apprentice's path.
- Significant effort will be put forth by the sod grower to set up a successful apprentice experience. A willing and positive apprentice attitude will greatly enhance the experience for all parties involved.
- Due to variables such as available time for both the farmer and the apprentice, growing seasons, weather, apprentice and farm locations and potentially other jobs held by the apprentice during the apprenticeship period, this apprenticeship will be best executed when both parties communicate their availability and interests for a mutually beneficial outcome.