

## *What is Grass Roots?*

*Grass Roots* is a four-year Initiative that focuses on turf – the uses of turf, the management of turf, the benefits of turf, the value of turf. *Grass Roots* will be developed, organized and managed by the U.S. National Arboretum.

## *What is the National Arboretum?*

The U.S. National Arboretum is a 446 acre research and education facility in NE Washington, DC, two miles from the U.S. Capitol. The Arboretum is a part of the Agricultural Research Service, the in-house research arm of USDA. 500,000 people visit the Arboretum annually.

## *Why is the National Arboretum interested in turf?*

Besides informing the public and generating interest, the National Arboretum wants to demonstrate the value of its research, and science in general to the public. In addition, turfgrasses and turf management are often presented as evil and harmful to society and the environment. The National Arboretum intends to interject scientific based information into the discussion concerning turfgrass and its use in the landscape.

## *What are the components of Grass Roots?*

*Grass Roots* consists of the following five components:

- An outdoor interactive exhibit
- Extensive information on the web provide more detailed information to complement the outdoor exhibit
- Workshops, product demonstrations and symposia
- The development of the *National Greenscape Corridor*, a cooperative effort linking the National Mall, Arlington National Cemetery and the National Arboretum
- A tabletop book of 'Personal Grass Roots' stories, i.e. stories from many well-known persons on their early childhood experience with lawn mowing or grounds keeping and how this shaped their future

### *How and when will Grass Roots be initiated?*

The initial phase of *Grass Roots* is the design and construction of the outdoor turfgrass exhibit. Currently, a draft design has been developed by a team including Arboretum staff and turfgrass researchers. This design, along with the messaging (the points that will be discussed and the language used to present those points) has been reviewed by an industry advisory panel. The Arboretum hopes to complete the design process by the summer and start construction this fall.

### *What about the workshops, symposia and web site information portion of Grass Roots?*

Information for the web site has been initiated and will be an ongoing effort, with new information being developed and posted on a regular basis throughout the four-year period. Some of the first information will likely be placed on the National Arboretum web site when the outdoor display construction starts this fall. Potential workshops, demonstration and symposia are being considered and a schedule of 2014 planned events will be available sometime in 2013.

### *Tell me more about the National Greenscape Corridor. How and when will it be implemented?*

The National Greenscape Corridor concept is in the early development stages, with the National Arboretum staff and the turf managers from the National Mall and Arlington National Cemetery meeting recently to discuss common goals and needs. We envision this cooperative effort to include shared educational programs and facilities, along with visitor signage at the three locations highlighting turf uses and needs at each site, as well as how turf provides benefits.

### *When will the tabletop Grass Roots book be available?*

The book is the final phase of *Grass Roots* and will be developed and released sometime within the four-year time frame of the Initiative.

## *How is Grass Roots funded and how much will it cost?*

Almost all the funding for *Grass Roots* will be provided by the turfgrass industry, through both cash donations and product/service in-kind support. We estimate that \$400,000 in cash and in-kind support will need to be raised to design and build the outdoor exhibit, as well as maintain the exhibit for the four-year period.

## *How much funding has been raised to date?*

As of the end of June 2013, about \$140,000 in cash and in-kind support has been pledged by the industry (35% of what is needed). In addition, the exhibit design is being donated by the design firm Rain Underground.

## *Money in the industry is tight, therefore why should we support Grass Roots?*

The turf industry has been clamoring for years that science based information about turfgrass is not presented to the public. This exhibit will clearly change that as this is the first time that a federal government agency, USDA-ARS, will inform the public of the benefits and uses of turfgrass. Also, the Arboretum's facilities are available for functions and events by private companies and organizations, with the Arboretum being the perfect venue to introduce legislators to turf, hold a private party for staff or donors, or training for cooperators and members.

## *How are we assured that the information will be science-based and factual?*

First, the information is has been reviewed by a turfgrass industry advisory panel. Second, and most important, all of the exhibit messages and web site information are being reviewed for scientific accuracy by the C5 division (turfgrass scientists) of the Crop Science Society of America. The Arboretum is going to great lengths to ensure that all information presented is based on sound science. Much of the information posted on the web will also include references to refereed scientific studies.

*I am concerned that if the outdoor exhibit is not well maintained, this will not present a positive image of turf.*

We have that same concern and that is why a portion of the funding will be used to hire a full-time coordinator for *Grass Roots*. The Coordinator position has been developed and announced. The Coordinator will be an employee of the National Turfgrass Federation, Inc. but will have an office along with the other coordinators and curators at the Arboretum.

*What happens to Grass Roots if not enough money is raised to build the outdoor exhibit? Will the National Arboretum supply the funding?*

The National Arboretum is already providing about \$83,000 in staff support and expertise. If the funding pledged is insufficient to construct and install the outdoor exhibit, and considering today's federal government cuts, it is unlikely that the Arboretum will be able to provide additional support to build the outdoor exhibit.

*I would like to pledge, but may need to fulfill my pledge in annual installments over a three or four year period. Is that possible?*

Yes, we will accept pledges over multiple years. We understand that in some instances, it is easier to budget a smaller amount over several years than provide a one-time lump sum. **About \$250,000 are up-front costs that are needed to construct the outdoor exhibit, with the remainder needed for long-term maintenance.**

*Are there giving levels and what is the deadline for giving?*

Yes, we have levels of sponsorship, which can be found in the following pages. We do not have a deadline for giving, as companies and organizations may need to work within their own budget cycle. **However, if \$250,000 is not raised by sometime this summer, the exhibit will not be constructed and the Grass Roots Initiative will expire.**