

# Grass Roots Exhibit Takes Hold at the National Arboretum

Interactive outdoor exhibit starts four-year run.

Visitors to the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., this year will have an opportunity to learn about the many benefits of turfgrass. A new exhibit, called "Grass Roots" will focus on the environmental, economic, aesthetic, and recreational benefits of turfgrass in landscapes, golf courses, and athletic fields.

The project is a cooperative effort between the U.S. National Arboretum, the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, and the National Turfgrass Federation. In addition to 14 educational stations, the exhibit will feature professional and scientific symposia and homeowner-focused workshops and demonstrations.

"This is an effort to educate the public on the value of turfgrass," related PLANET Director of Government Affairs, Tom Delaney, who attended the groundbreaking ceremony on Nov. 15, 2013. "The PLANET board understands that Grass Roots is very important to the lawn care industry and stepped up to make a sizeable donation to the project."

"This National Arboretum project is also the first of its kind in the country," explained Delaney. "It may even encourage other arboretums to offer similar educational venues in support of the industry."

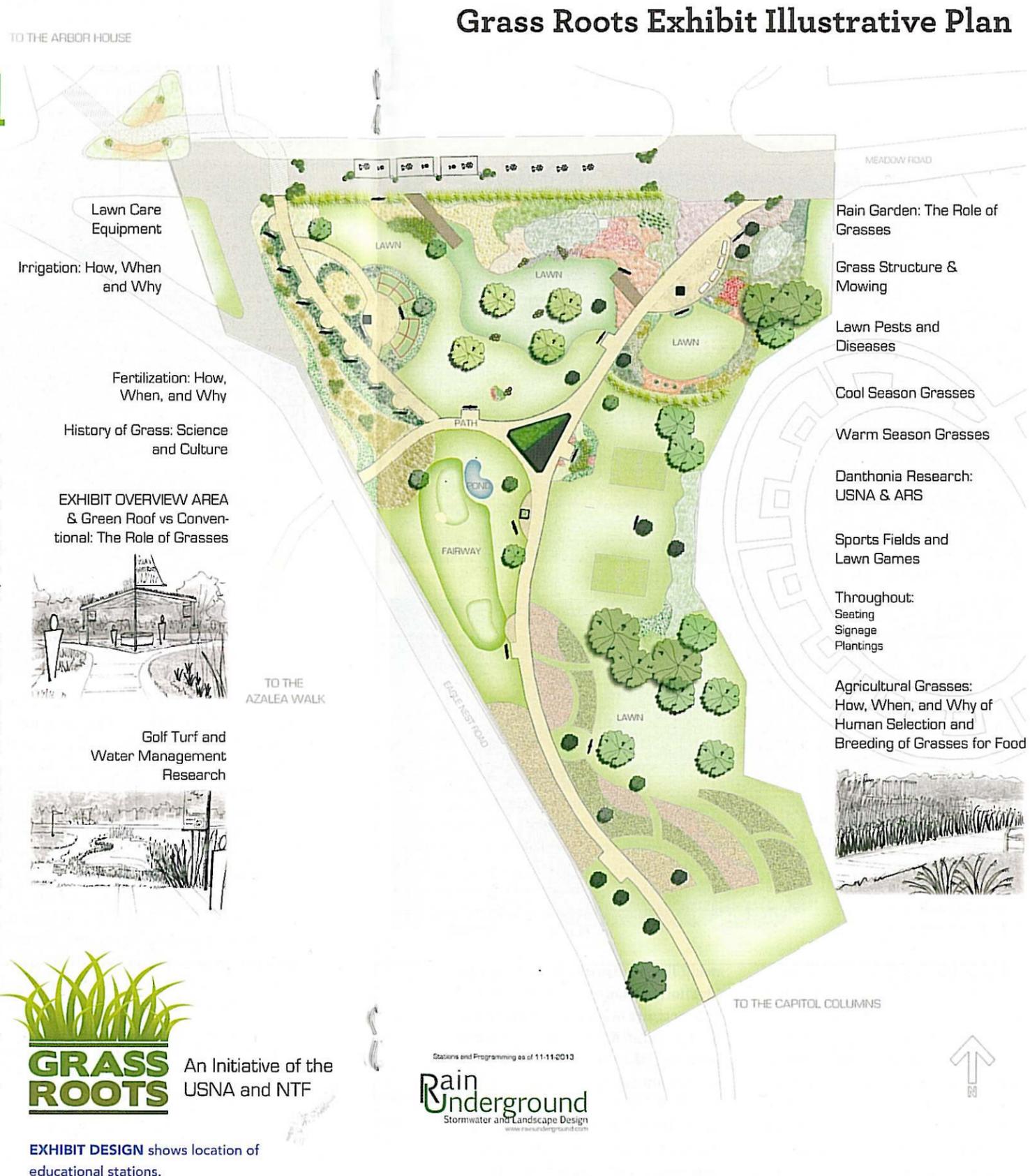
## CENTER STAGE

The "Grass Roots" exhibit, which is scheduled for a four-year run, occupies more than an acre at the entrance to the National Arboretum. The high-traffic area receives more than 500,000 visitors annually, and four different entrance paths will allow them to pick and choose topics of special interest.

"The initiative is committed to helping citizens, including national decision-makers, understand new and emerging science underlying our nation's beautiful lawns, athletic fields, and gardens," said National Arboretum Director, Dr. Colien Heferan. She noted that the interactive outdoor exhibit will highlight the results of turfgrass research and communicate that managed turf landscapes are essential in conserving soils, retaining and filtering water, offering a venue for socialization and recreation, and enhancing the aesthetics of a property.

## FOURTEEN STATIONS

The centerpiece of the exhibit is the welcome station that provides an overview of the exhibit, acts as a sheltered gathering space, and demonstrates runoff on a green roof versus a conventional roof. Among other stations of special interest to homeowners are:



## Grass Roots Exhibit Illustrative Plan

- » **Liquid Assets.** Explains the basics of irrigation, its importance, and water use efficiency.
- » **Feed Me.** Explains the history of fertilizer and why nutrients are important for lawns.
- » **Bottoms Up.** Shows how grasses grow and why they are used in lawns.
- » **Happy with Heat or Content with Cold.** Demonstrates the differences between cool- and warm-season turfgrass species.

## MORE TO COME

In addition to the exhibit stations, symposia, workshops, and demonstrations, the Grass Roots initiative will feature a dedicated website, the development of a National Greenscape Corridor, and a tabletop book.

The website will provide more detailed information to complement the outdoor exhibits. Still in the early development stage, a National Greenscape Corridor will be a cooperative effort between the National Arboretum staff and the turf managers of the National Mall and Arlington National Cemetery. As envisioned, the effort would include shared educational programs and facilities, along with visitor signage at each site highlighting turf uses, needs, and benefits.

A tabletop book is the final phase of the four-year initiative. It will feature stories from many well-known persons about their early childhood experience with lawn mowing or grounds keeping and how this shaped their future.

As part of its developer role, the National Arboretum is acting as general contractor for the construction of the more specialized stations, including those highlighting golf courses, sports turf, and green roofs. While the exhibit itself will be completed later this spring, another phase of the larger project will be to thematically link the exhibit to other displays and gardens at the National Arboretum.