

People & Places

Selling real grass in dry Bay Area

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

MORGAN HILL, Calif. — Sod farmer Erin Gil offers a counterpoint to the old saying, “Don’t let any grass grow under your feet.”

In fact, he hopes it does, especially during the drought that covers much of the region.

Erin’s father, William Y. Gil, started the family’s turf farm — aptly named Grass Farm — in 1969. It has continued to grow to 120 acres and now serves the San Francisco Bay Area.

“Starting as a family farm, we all helped out with chores as well as canvassing new and upcoming neighborhoods looking for new home owners that could afford to sod their front or back yards,” Erin said. “In those times, it was hard to convince homeowners to spend the extra money to hire someone to grow their front yard. Everyone seeded their lawns.”

Erin recalled that his other early responsibilities were walking the fields picking up rocks, roots and other debris to keep the turf clean.

Grass Farm’s product line consists of cool season turf varieties that follow the Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance research and development guidelines.



Santa Clara County Farm Bureau

Erin Gil, a sod farmer from Morgan Hill, Calif., says natural turf is much more able to weather high temperatures than the artificial variety.

Alliance members include seed producers, turf breeders, university researchers and industry experts.

Following the alliance’s guidelines, the company offers grass varieties that are drought tolerant and offer the best color and texture.

Being in a transition climate zone, Bay Area homeowners can plant warm sea-

son grass such as hybrid Bermuda.

For cool season lawns in the Bay Area double dwarf fescue remains the choice, and hybrid Bermuda can be used through winter dormancy.

With drought and COVID-19 lingering, selling grass sod can be a challenge. Oddly, many prob-

lems are traced to irrigation, not drought.

“In our experience, we spend the most time solving problems associated with irrigation,” Erin said. “Many of the problems associated with disease and die back are associated with applying too much or too little water.”

Once lawns are bursting with lush green grass, customers can visit Garden Accents in nearby Gilroy. It is operated by Erin’s sister, Debbie Barcord, and offers fountains, plants and pottery.

Erin has spent years supporting local organizations: California Landscape Contractors Association, Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, Santa Clara Counties Valley Water, Landscape Advisory Committee and the Santa Clara County Planning Commission.

However, there is no support for surface and underground pests. He said cool season turf’s biggest problem in the Bay Area is infestations of white grubs.

Then there are gophers. These furry nuisances can be controlled by gopher wire, traps, baits and water to flush them out of their holes.

Artificial turf also falls in the “unwanted” category. He said grass outperforms fake turf, especially in hot weather.

ERIN GIL
Residence: Morgan Hill, Calif.
Occupation: Sod farmer and owner, Grass Farm Inc.
Website: www.grassfarm.com
Quote: “I am so glad to spend so much time over the years bringing joy to so many.”

On a hot day, Gil measured the surface temperatures of grass and other surfaces.

It was an August afternoon at about 5 p.m. The artificial turf registered 148 degrees, asphalt was 134 degrees, concrete was in the upper 120 degrees and natural turf was 98 degrees.

“Anyone could say our urban ‘heat island’ is as much a matter of the changes to the landscape materials used as atmospheric carbon dioxide,” he said.

That, he said, is why he’s sold on the real thing.

National FFA convention returns to Indianapolis

Capital Press

The National FFA Organization will hold its annual in-person convention this fall in Indianapolis.

The event, which traditionally brings more than 65,000 attendees, will take place Oct. 27-30.

Expected in-person events during the convention include the American FFA Degree ceremony, career success tours, competitive events, delegate business sessions, entertainment, the National FFA Expo and shopping mall, general sessions, student and teacher workshops and the National Days of Service.

In addition to the in-person event, the organization will offer a virtual pro-



ffa.org

The national FFA convention will be in Indianapolis again this fall, the organization announced this week.

gram, including student and teacher workshops, the virtual FFA Blue Room, National Days of Service and the streaming of general sessions.

“We are excited to come

back to the great city of Indianapolis that has been such a gracious host to us in years past,” Mandy Hazlett, associate director of convention and events at the National FFA Organization, said in a

press release.

“We know convention will look a bit different this year, but we are excited to offer this opportunity to our student members once again,” she said.

In 2020, the organization canceled the in-person event due to the COVID-19 pandemic and instead offered a virtual experience.

“While convention looked a little different in 2020 than we were used to, our members showed their ability to adapt and create meaningful experiences while still celebrating FFA and agricultural education,” said James Woodard, national FFA adviser.

“We are excited to bring an in-person event back to our members and the city of

Indianapolis,” he said.

The convention will be held at the Indiana Convention Center, which has invested \$7 million in new health and safety upgrades.

“Throughout the year, FFA members across the country have shown their resiliency and ability to adapt as we faced new challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Doster Harper, National FFA president.

“Our team has been inspired by these members as they have continued to find new and creative ways to live to serve. It is because of their perseverance that we are thrilled to offer an in-person event to our members as we celebrate this future generation of leaders,” he said.

Washington FFA announces new state officers

Washington FFA has a new team of state officers for 2021-2022.

Alyxandra Bozeman was elected president; Ainsley Carpenter of Deer Park FFA as vice president; Madison Wolfe of Pullman FFA as secretary; Kinsey Nelson of Walla Walla FFA as treasurer; Caitlyn Garvey of Yelm FFA as reporter; and Andrew Miles of Finley FFA as sentinel.

The officers were chosen May 15 during the 91st Washington FFA Convention live streamed from

Beasley Coliseum at Washington State University in Pullman.

State officers commit to a year of service to the Washington FFA Association. They travel throughout Washington and the Pacific Northwest to interact with business and industry leaders, thousands of FFA members and teachers, corporate sponsors, government and education officials, state FFA leaders and the public.

The team will lead personal growth and leadership training workshops for FFA members throughout the

state and help set policies that will guide the future of FFA and promote agricultural literacy.

Washington FFA Association provides intracurricular learning and leadership to more than 9,750 student members statewide.

The National FFA Organization provides leadership, personal growth and career success training through agricultural education to 760,113 student members who belong to one of 8,739 local FFA chapters throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico.



The 2021-2022 Washington FFA State Officers are, from left, Madison Wolfe, secretary (Pullman); Kinsey Nelson, treasurer (Walla Walla); Andrew Miles, sentinel (Finley); Caitlyn Garvey, reporter (Yelm); Ainsley Carpenter, vice president (Deer Park); and Alyxandra Bozeman, president (White River).

CALENDAR

Submit upcoming ag-related events on www.capitalpress.com or by email to newsroom@capitalpress.com.

**WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY
JUNE 9-11**

World Pork Expo: Iowa State Fairgrounds, Des Moines. The world’s largest pork industry-specific trade show brings together pork producers and industry professionals from around the world for three days of education, innovation and networking. Website: <https://worldpork.org/>

**THURSDAY-SATURDAY
JUNE 24-26**

United Fresh Convention and Expo (in person and online): Los Angeles Convention Center. Whether online or in person, United Fresh is your partner connecting the global fresh produce industry. Sponsored by the United Fresh Produce Association and the Fresh Produce and Floral Council. Website:

<https://www.unitedfresh.org/united-fresh-convention-expo-2021/#>

**MONDAY-TUESDAY
JUNE 28-29**

Idaho Cattle Association Summer Round-Up: Stagecoach Inn, Salmon, Idaho. The conference will include updates from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, Idaho Beef Council, Idaho Department of Agriculture and Idaho Departments of Lands, as well as market updates. An optional rafting trip is planned for June 27. Website: www.idahocattle.org

**WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY
JUNE 30-JULY 1**

Western Governors’ Association 2021 Annual Meeting (virtual): The event will feature governors in roundtable discussions on topics such as energy response, public lands challenges, shared stewardship, infrastructure and workforce. Website: www.westgov.org

**TUESDAY-THURSDAY
AUG. 10-12**

2021 Cattle Industry Convention & Trade Show: Gaylord Opryland Resort, Nashville, Tenn. The convention will include educational seminars, exhibits and networking. Website: <http://convention.ncba.org>

**WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY
AUG. 18-20**

Farwest Show: Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland. The Farwest Show, the biggest green industry trade show in the West, is produced by the Oregon Association of Nurseries, a trade organization that represents and serves the interests of the ornamental horticulture industry. For more information, go to www.farwestshow.com

R-CALF USA 2021 Convention and Trade Show: Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, S.D. The convention will feature industry speakers and networking opportunities. Website: www.rcalfconvention.com

AUG. 20-29

Western Idaho Fair: Expo Idaho, 5610 Glenwood St., Boise. Check back later for more information. Website: www.idahofair.com

AUG. 27-SEPT. 6

Oregon State Fair: Oregon State Fair & Exposition Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. We’re looking forward to welcoming you back to the Oregon State Fair, Aug. 27-Sept. 6, 2021. Stand by for more information! Website: <https://oregonstatefair.org/>

SEPT. 3-11

Eastern Idaho State Fair: Eastern Idaho Fairgrounds, 97 Park St., Blackfoot, Idaho. The daily schedule and entertainment line-up will be published in June. Website: <https://funatthefair.com/>

SEPT. 3-26

Washington State Fair: Washington State Fair Events Center, 110 9th Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. Open Labor Day weekend. Closed Tuesdays and Sept. 8. Website: <https://www.washingtonstatefair.com/>

www.thefair.com/

**TUESDAY-SATURDAY
SEPT. 28-OCT. 2**

World Dairy Expo: Alliant Energy Center, 1919 Alliant Energy Center Way, Madison, Wis. Among the many events held are contests and a trade show. Website: <https://worlddairyexpo.com>

**WEDNESDAY-SATURDAY
OCT. 27-30**

National FFA Convention and Expo: Indianapolis, Ind. The National FFA Organization will host an in-person 94th National FFA Convention & Expo Oct. 27-30, with a virtual program. National FFA will continue to follow all health guidelines set by the county, state and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More information will be shared as it becomes available. Housing for the in-person event will open July 14, with convention registration opening Sept. 8. Website: <https://convention.ffa.org/>

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