For years, professionals throughout the turfgrass industry have been striving to communicate to the public about the importance of turfgrass for a variety of uses in modern life. In the United States, the turfgrass industry has faced increased public and media scrutiny. Many misperceptions about the industry have evolved and continue among the general public and policymakers. In 2012, the National Turfgrass Federation (NTF), a nonprofit trade organization that promotes the turfgrass industry, began collaborating with the US National Arboretum to develop the Grass Roots Initiative. The Grass Roots Initiative was officially launched in late 2013 and is scheduled to continue through 2018. The goal of the Initiative is to provide basic turfgrass outreach and education while promoting the environmental, economic, aesthetic, and recreational benefits of turfgrass. The Initiative is comprised of six primary component parts: (i) a 0.5-ha exhibit at the US National Arboretum with examples of turfgrasses, ornamental grasses, and food grasses; (ii) turfgrass management educational programming conducted in the form of workshops, exhibit tours, and presentations in the Washington, DC, area; (iii) a website that complements and augments the information presented in the exhibit; (iv) development of the National Greenscape Corridor to expand public outreach and education to other public landscapes in Washington, DC; (v) policymaker outreach to promote the economic and environmental functions of turfgrass; and (vi) facilitating construction and ongoing exhibition development of Grass Roots exhibits in general, the Grass Roots exhibit is unique of public gardens and arboreta because turfgrass tends to be an under-represented aspect of public educational focus. To the authors’ knowledge, this public turfgrass exhibit in the United States hosted an estimated 30,000 visitors in both its first two years of operation.

Grass Roots Initiative Exhibit and Displays
The 0.5-ha exhibit is located near the front of the US National Arboretum and contains displays designed to engage visitors to learn about turfgrass uses and benefits, history, and best management practices. Displays include a compact golf hole, sports fields, lawn areas featuring a variety of warm- and cool-season grass species, irrigation and fertilizer displays, and a rain garden demonstrating the ability of grass to absorb water and nutrients. The displays are summarized below.