

UF/IFAS's plant sciences. The G.C. Horn turf plots on the north side of Gainesville will be relocated there. However, the Envirotron and its attendant research green will remain on campus. The G.C. Horn name will move to the new location. Turf and Ornamentals were one of the first commodity groups to commit to the move, giving us a prime plot of 40 to 50 acres.

The strategy is to consolidate UF/IFAS's many far-flung research facilities into a few manageable, efficient, and first-rate centers. The Gainesville campus continues to sprawl from increased enrollment, making it too crowded and impractical to continue the many small and diverse research areas. Furthermore, many of the smaller off-campus plots and stations have become "unsustainable" because of inadequate funding for maintenance. The operative words are "deferred maintenance," meaning the research and education centers are never given enough state funding to maintain their facilities, such as fix the roofs and air conditioners.

While the events of Sept. 11 caused our governor to slash the IFAS budget about another \$8 million this year, the truth is that IFAS has been squeezed by all the Legislatures since 1987. The bottom line is that Florida's politics are now controlled by urbanites elected by urbanites who have no understanding or appreciation for agriculture, the green industry, or natural resources.

We have worked hard over the years to show our industry's support of UF/IFAS research, only to have state support continue to diminish, and many programs to erode instead of advance. Perhaps our main thrust should be political activism to educate the urbanites about the value of IFAS programs to the green industry and to the protection of our natural resources - the primary reason people move to or visit Florida.

But I digress. The Pine Acres presentation was well received by those company representatives who attended. It was a soft sell approach meant to introduce the plans and put out feelers for

support rather than to solicit a defined commitment. IFAS Vice President Mike Martin gave a superb presentation, supported by Dr. Terril Nell and several of the UF turf faculty, using an excellent video developed just for this presentation, with a take-home folder of pertinent info about IFAS and the turf program.

I give the effort an "A," but I've been at this long enough to be optimistically cautious when people are asked to reach for their wallets.

I know that some in our industry are so frustrated with the politics that they are considering washing their hands of support to the IFAS turfgrass program. This would be a big mistake. Research in Florida under Florida conditions is important to us as professionals, and to the people who live in this state, even if they don't yet understand it or help support it. We may have hit a bump in the road, but the turfgrass program is moving forward, and all Florida turfgrass professionals need to help make it the best in the country.

Putting Things Into Perspective

GREEN SIDE UP



Joel Jackson, CGCS

As the war of words continues with respect to environmental issues, it is our duty to speak up when our industry and our profession are assailed in the media and at county commission or water-management-district meetings. Words and phrases like "big water users" and "runoff" and "pollution" are bandied about and repeated so often in the media, that the mere mention of them is accepted as fact.

Of course a little cursory fact finding and research into reality tells us that golf courses are not big water users. Just because we are visible and well maintained doesn't mean we are water wasters. According to the U. S. Geological Survey of fresh water withdrawals done in 1995, golf only used 2.6 percent of the total water pumped daily. The USGS compiles the data from all five water management districts every five years. The 2000 report is being assembled now.

You can't read an article on ground water and water quality without finding the words "runoff" and "pollution" automatically associated with the use of fertilizers and pesticides. The years of studies and research have shown repeatedly in different parts of the country, under different environmental conditions, that fertilizers and pesticides applied properly do not negatively impact

the environment. What reporters and critics fail to mention is that it is the *misuse* of products that can cause potential problems. But isn't that true for anything we do? Over 50,000 people a year are killed in automobile accidents. Nearly half a million birds are killed every week from flying into glass skyscrapers and from cat predation.

How many people are killed from proper pesticide use? The answer is zero.

There are some pesticide poisonings each year, but they come from suicide, homicide, accidents or misuse. There's no hue and cry to ban automobiles, raze skyscrapers or destroy all cats. There's only the constant focus on pesticides as the evil force in world.

The words "toxic" and "toxins" are used with such venom in describing pesticide use on lawns and golf courses as if pesticides were the only toxic substance mankind comes in contact with thanks to the green industries. Once again the critics ignore the fact that studies done on lab rats show that nicotine, gasoline and caffeine are more "toxic" than diazinon. Guess which substance has been banned? MSDS sheets also show aspirin is more toxic than malathion, and table salt, vinegar and baking soda are more toxic than glyphosate and benlate.

Dose makes the poison and many natural and organic substances from animal and plant extracts can be poisonous or beneficial when used in prescribed amounts. Consider antibiotics and fungicides people use to kill bacteria, athlete's foot and yeast infections in and on their bodies. Botox, a product derived from the deadly botulism bacteria, is injected in people's faces to firm up sagging skin. People have much less contact with pesticides applied to lawns and golf courses than they do with the common everyday medicines,

cleansers, solvents and other products that can cause health effects when misused.

Nonprofit activist organizations need conflicts to generate publicity to generate donations and foundation grants. The media needs conflict to generate headlines and stories to generate readership to justify advertising rates. These two groups form an insidious relationship that fosters speculation, not education.

We can't out-finance or out-shout the narrow-minded critics, but we can respond to misinformation when we see it or hear it.

Abusers of any product or process should be exposed and prevented from doing harm to the environment. But painting all pesticides and fertilizers - and those who use them - with the same brush is not only shameful, it is irresponsible. The development and proper use of pesticides and fertilizers have made the U.S. the number-one food producer in the world, and we do it on less land, which allows us to preserve habitat, and we have the safest food supply in the world.

Only a relatively small percentage of the population works with nature and our natural resources. The ones who do respect and protect the environment because their livelihoods depend on it. Most of the general public, including legislators and regulators, are from urban settings; they are disconnected from the land. Their view of the world is a 25-inch TV screen or a newspaper headline screaming, "Pollution!"

We can't out-finance or out-shout the narrow-minded critics, but we can respond to misinformation when we see it or hear it. Until we do a better job of educating lawmakers and the media, we will have to try to put things into perspective one story at a time.