I just completed one of my busiest years as director of communications for the Florida GCSA, and a large portion of my time and effort was spent on government-relations issues from A to W (arsenic to water).

It seemed like a lot of finger pointing and hand wringing from the environmentalists and media, which eventually filters up to the politicians and regulators for action, was generated by their continuous tunnel vision about golf courses. You know the mantra by now: big water users; runoff and pollution; rich man’s game. Yada, yada, yada.

Their limited field of vision does not allow for the ebb and flow of natural forces. If something is dead or dying, man must have done something wrong, and heaven help us if a golf course is anywhere nearby.

This tunnel vision distorts their views so much they think we are sucking the aquifers dry, and spraying and fertilizing every square inch of the golf course every day. They never stop to consider that we might actually take a practical, logical, economical or environmental approach to managing our turfgrass by using alternative sources of water and applying chemicals and fertilizers only when and where needed. Will they ever see the light?

Unfortunately, tunnel vision is not limited to golf’s detractors. Even the most proactive of our ranks can be just as guilty of the affliction. When the leaders, movers and shakers and visionaries dedicate themselves to Audubon’s Cooperative Sanctuary Program, reams of best management practices, integrated pest-management ideas and volunteering, they end up associating with like-minded people. It is good to feed off the positive energy of all those trying to elevate our profession and the practices in the industry, but we often overlook those who don’t get it, can’t get it or won’t get it.

And the reasons for not getting it are as varied as the duties of superintendents. You can chalk it up to the personalities of superintendents, owners and members. You can blame apathy, budgets and corporate mentality. You can blame arrogance, ignorance and intolerance. That doesn’t mean that we don’t have a problem right here in River City.

By Joel Jackson

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson retired from Disney’s golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.