



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Should costs be included?**

*Turf Grass Trends* is super! I thoroughly enjoyed your premier issue. It fills a niche not addressed by current publications.

What's particularly amazing is the almost complete absence of errors or mistakes. However, I did stumble across one. In his excellent article on Pythium diseases, Dr. Nelson does a great job of explaining Pythium root rot. Unfortunately, there is an error on Page 4 regarding the relative cost of Pythium control products. Alette fungicide is considerably more expensive than indicated. Using a \$12 per lb. retail price, Alette's actual cost per thousand is \$3.00 and \$6.00 at 4 + 8 oz. rate, respectively.

You may want to clarify this with Dr. Nelson and Rhone-Poulenc (the manufacturer of Alette); I'm confident they are interested in an accurate portrayal. In the future, you may want to discourage cost comparisons since it is almost impossible to make accurate comparisons based on suggested list prices, special promotions, local availability, etc.

Again, congratulations on a successful first issue and good luck!

— L. DOUGLAS HOUSEWORTH, PH.D.  
Man. Tech. Support, Turf & Ornamental Dept.  
CIBA-GEIGY, Greensboro, North Carolina

*We appreciate the encouragement and the correction. You are right about the costs of applying Alette.*

*Despite all the variables involved in the real world prices that end users pay for products, we believe that a comparison of the costs is essential. After all, costs are a major factor—especially since a lawncare operator may not be able to charge enough for an application to warrant using a more expensive material—regardless of its potential benefits. These price indicators are simply that—indicators of the approximate price range.*

*However, given the variables you noted, in the future, we will include a disclaimer (see chart page 3).*

**Drift agent is available**

Let me congratulate you on what appears to be an informative and useful product.

In your On the Horizon column, you spoke of drift control agents. Please note that Rockland Corp. has been selling Rockland Target Drift Retardant for the last two years. This is a highly concentrated drift and mist retardant that can be added directly to spray mixes.

— ROBERT K. WITTPENN  
Rockland Corporation  
West Caldwell, NJ

# The diagnostic art

by Christopher Sann

**D**ESPITE ALL THE SCIENTIFIC technicalities involved in diagnosing turf problems, like virtually every other specialized form of problem-solving, it ultimately is an art. Sure, it requires skills that are gained by trial and error, which is the basis of science. It also requires a healthy dose of curiosity, which motivates our willingness to go through trials and errors in the hope of gaining new knowledge. However, being good at diagnosing turf problems also requires certain personality traits or habits of thought that have more to do with art than science or technology.



These traits may boil down simply to being a person who likes growing things, and taking care of them. What's the reward? When things go right, we see beauty. That is what a healthy, well-maintained stand of turf is—a thing of beauty. Many people in the field probably don't recognize the artist in themselves, but this artistic aspect of turf management is what drives our desire to do better, to achieve a higher level of quality—to manage to make the green spaces we care for more beautiful.

Developing a diagnostic sense should involve a system of financial as well as psychological rewards, but the essence of craftsmanship is that it helps us to feel good about ourselves and what we do—even if the financial rewards aren't always what they should be. When an area responds to what you have done to it, seeing how beautiful it looks provides an on-the-spot reward that is every bit as essential as the technical know-how involved.

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**Honest evaluation requires both the courage of convictions—the ability to make decisions—and the humility required to recognize when those convictions and decisions didn't work.**

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The actual process of diagnosis starts with a keen sense of observation and a willingness to search and research for relevant information. Formulating action plans—deciding what the problem is and what you are going to do to correct it—combines these first two activities. As anyone who has tried knows, applying book knowledge amid the complexities of the field isn't a simple process.

Carrying out your plans is relatively straight-forward, but it too has to be done with care. "Measure twice, cut once"