

## State GCSA Meeting

If you hurry, there might still be time to register for the state meeting and golf tournament to be held in San Diego. This year's meeting is titled, **BACK TO BASICS**. The San Diego chapter has lined up our own Dr. Ali Harivandi, Dr. Eric Nelson from Cornell, Dr. Dave Kopec from Arizona, and Dr. Joe Vargas from Michigan State to be among the featured speakers. The San Diego Chapter has arranged attractive room rates at the Princess Resort, golf at world famous Torrey Pines Golf Course and the flavor of America's Cup racing throughout our stay.

Call the CGCSA office for details at (619) 566-3400. See you there!.



## Think of Lawns As Rain Forests

*Release from The Turf Resource Center*

**W**hat does a rain forest do that a lawn doesn't also do? This was one of the many pro-turf and pro-environment questions posed to members of the Environmental Care Association at their annual convention during the keynote address delivered December 7 by Doug Fender, Executive Director of the Turfgrass Producers International.

According to Fender, "Both lawns and rain forests are made up of thousands or millions of plants . . . the average 10,000 square foot lawn has over 8.5 million individual grass plants with in excess of 8 million miles of roots. The micro and macro, flora and fauna populations living in that forest of grass are immense, serving very useful purposes." He concluded, "Who knows, maybe like the hope we hold for the

rain forests, the cure for many diseases may be waiting to be discovered, right under our feet!" He also noted that lawns, like the rain forests, moderate temperatures, hold soil in place and enrich it through decomposition of plant tissue and biodegrade many pollutants that would otherwise stay in the air or go into the water supplies.

During his hour-long presentation to the Idaho Association of Lawn Care Operators and Pest-Control Specialists, Fender encouraged them to increase their personal awareness and education about environmental issues. He also invited them to become more pro-active by sharing scientifically based facts about the benefits of turfgrass with the public to counter the pseudo-scientific attacks by people he termed "eco-terrorists." He suggested that if every-

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## Think . . . Rain Forest

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one in the turfgrass industry was as effective in teaching the environmental benefits of turf as they have been selling the aesthetics of lawns, the entire planet would benefit.

To illustrate his position, he took information normally used by those opposed to turf and showed how they had twisted the facts. For example, the EPA reports homeowners apply 70 million pounds of pesticides to their lawns each year, which seems like a frighteningly large amount. But, when that amount is divided across 20 million lawns it equates to less than two ounces of herbicide and less than a half ounce of insecticide per 1,000 square foot of lawn . . . below most recommended rates. He suggested that if people truly understood the environmental benefits of a properly maintained lawn, the concern would be

directed to the 62 percent of home lawns that are not receiving the best possible care as a natural resource.

In another example, he reported that

*"Both lawns and rain forests are made up of thousand or millions of plants . . . Who knows, maybe like the hope we hold for the rain forests, the cure for many diseases is waiting to be discovered, right under our feet!"*

because grass clippings going into landfills are calculated on a wet-clipping basis, they are said to represent 20 to 50 percent of the total flow of the waste stream. However, knowing that clippings are 90 percent water and they degrade quickly, the actual dry bulk amount clippings contribute to landfills is more like 2 percent. He added that while clippings are not actually large contributors to the waste stream, homeowners should be educated about the benefits of leaving the clippings on the lawn as it is mowed to return the nutrients they naturally contain.

Other environment-related points brought out during the talk by Fender included tree-turf water use comparison fallacies, the comparative low risk

actually resulting from proper pesticide use, and the massive size of the Environmental Protection Agency's annual budget.

In closing his presentation, Fender urged the audience members to begin examining their entire public relations and education efforts, as well as how they can more effectively market the benefits of their products and services to a population that is continuing to undergo major changes.

*\* A copy of the 16 page manuscript is available from the Turf Resource Center. 800-405-TURF (8873)*

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