
JB COMMENTS:

This writer has spent many, many hours searching the publications and art work of earlier centuries in the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, and Kew Gardens Libraries of London, England. Based on these investigations I've concluded that turfs as we know them today started to evolve more than 10 centuries ago. For many centuries people have been willing to devote time and resources to enhance their quality-of-life and recreational opportunities through turfgrasses. Equally important, throughout these many centuries turfgrasses have played a vital role in protecting our environment, especially in more populated urban areas, long before the quality of our environment became a major issue of national and international importance to modern societies. No other form of vegetation has been as effective in protecting our vital soil resources and water quality in these urban areas as have turfgrasses.

Why then have environmental radicals focused so much effort on allegations that turfgrasses are a major contributor to apocalyptic scenarios of environmental decline? These individuals use unsubstantiated "pseudo scientific" claims and broad accusations that amount to nothing more than scare tactics. These ill-founded claims are readily disseminated to the public through the popular information channels of television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. When will the producers/editors in charge of these scare-of-the-week efforts start to act in a responsible manner by determining the validity of such claims before their release is approved?

It should be noted that although these environmental radicals present themselves as representatives for the "little" people with limited funding. However, many of these organizations are very well funded.

Conclusions based on sensible results-oriented scientific assessments do not support the much bally-hooed, unsubstantiated claims of these environmental radicals. Unfortunately, the turfgrass industry has not formed an effective coalition to respond to the accusations. Based on extensive research conducted over the past six to eight years, we now have sound science-based information to offer authoritative counter responses to the unsubstantiated claims of the environmental radicals. However, there is still the important dimension of individuals communicating at the grass roots level. This is where the individual turfgrass practitioner can play a very important role.

It behooves each of one of us to carefully study the available published information on environmental benefits and the environmental protection dimensions wherein turfgrasses play an important role. Every opportunity should be taken to communicate the available science-based information to individuals at the local level. One of the best approaches can be made through presentations before classes at the local schools, as well as speaking before garden clubs and local business organizations. Specific published articles and information on the subject should be provided to the local press, newspapers, and magazines. In summary, it is important that each of us get involved.

Fables employed by the environmental radicals focus on the following allegations.

- Turfgrasses use far more water than trees and shrubs, thus, we should substantially reduce turfgrass areas and plant trees.
- Turfgrasses are a major contributor to the pollution of our surface waters via soil erosion and applied fertilizers.
- Turfgrasses are a major threat to ground water quality since they are one of the largest users of pesticides and fertilizers.
- Turfgrasses are much more costly to maintain than trees, shrubs, ground covers, and flowers; and thus should be reduced because society can not afford this expenditure.