

# BACK TO

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS MANAGING EDITOR

# SCHOOL

Agrium Advanced Technologies offers lawn care professionals education along with relaxation.

WHEN EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON wrote, “The pen is mightier than the sword,” it’s clear he’d never seen a shotgun in the hands of journalists. But attendees of Agrium Advanced Technologies’ Green Industry Grad School witnessed just that. Held in December at Farmlinks in Sylacauga, AL, the about 40 “students” at this three-day “master’s-level school” — mostly lawn care professionals (LCPs), with a couple of rifle-toting journalists thrown in — learned about Agrium’s latest solutions to help LCPs save money, lead people and grow their businesses in this soft economy. They also got the chance to do a little fishing or boating, play a round of golf or grab a 12-gauge shotgun and take aim at flying sporting clays.

The Farmlinks facility, which encompasses 3,500 acres in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, was the majestic setting for Agrium’s educational program. Business owner, speaker and consultant Marty Grunder offered tips to leading in lean times and Dr. John L. Cisar, from the University of Florida, Gainesville, provided insight into the Sunshine State’s lawn care industry, presenting “Fertilizer & Environmental Fate.”

“We are fighting the battle, and we are losing,” Cisar proclaimed, explaining laws passed in Florida (and elsewhere) have little to do with sound agronomic practices and everything to do with politics.

We need facts. Fortunately, Cisar’s research is investigating how much nitrogen is absorbed in plant uptake, released into the atmosphere, stored in soil, and lost to runoff and/or leaching.

“As fertilizer managers, to have environmentally healthy turf we need to fertilize that turf,” he said. “It’s hard to figure out (the source of the nitrogen); it’s very easy to point



fingers,” said Cisar, adding legislators are pointing directly at the Green Industry.

During the Green Industry Grad School, Agrium’s experts explained how the company’s slate of slow- and

controlled-release fertilizers, such as Polyon, XCU and Duration, benefit LCPs, allowing them to do more with less — leveraging technologies that keep customers’ lawns greener longer.

When attendees weren’t learning about fertilizer or relaxing, attendees got a welcomed earful of education from Grunder and Jeff Korhan, an industry veteran turned consultant.

Korhan’s talk, “Green Industry Trends You Can Capitalize On,” honed in on three key points:

➤ **Human-centric business.** It’s no longer about companies; it’s about people.

➤ **Collaborative markets.** It’s not only about selling to buyers, but also about collaborating with them to develop better, more meaningful solutions.

➤ **Sustainable communities.** It’s not about exclusive organizations; it’s about accessible communities where members place their trust in one another. **LM**

## 11 WAYS TO ONE-UP THE COMPETITION

Consultant and business owner Marty Grunder offered attendees of Agrium’s Green Industry Grad School the following tips on gaining an advantage over the competition:

1. Offer great customer service
2. Be different
3. Make work fun
4. Have a team atmosphere
5. Survey clients and team members
6. Be clean and organized
7. Set objectives
8. Constantly communicate your mission and vision
9. Learn — be committed to it
10. Have your antennae up
11. Have a plan

Marty Grunder offers business advice. Your intrepid reporter (above) takes aim at defenseless sporting clays.

