

# The Politics of Chemicals

BY DAVID G. CASSIDY

Editor, *Turf Magazine*

**I**f anyone had any doubts before, it should now be obvious that with the recent restrictions announced on chlorpyrifos products (known to most people by the most common trade names Dursban and Lorsban), the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) is more about politics than science — more about elections than facts — more about what is expedient than what is right.

I have the EPA's press release announcing the restrictions on chlorpyrifos on my desk, and the headline alone makes me want to vomit. The headline reads, "Clinton-Gore Administration Acts to Eliminate Major Uses of the Pesticide Dursban to Protect Children and Public Health."

I've written before on how despicable it is for us to allow our politicians to use our children as pawns in their political agendas, so I'll leave that part alone. The first three words of this headline tell us all we need to know about what's going on here: "Clinton-Gore Administration . . ."

Why do you think Mr. Gore's name has all of a sudden become part of the story? The answer is the same as that to the question, "Why do you think the EPA decided to use the FQPA to go after the single most used and well known insecticide in the world?"

Haven't got the answer yet?

Well, the same answer could be used to answer the questions, "Why did the EPA ignore the testimony of over 200 individuals, each attesting to the benefits and safety of Dursban? Why was 35 years of safe use ignored, while an old study

about neurological effects in rodents held up as proof of the need for these restrictions?"

Still need the answer? Here it is: The presidential elections. This action and its timing is all about Mr. Gore solidifying his support in the environmental community. More importantly for Mr. Gore, having the EPA attack such a well known chemical (notice the use of the trade name in the headline, as opposed to the more correct use of the chemical name, which would not have made such a big splash) helps to get him support in the less-reactionary-yet-environmentally-concerned suburban homeowners.

Here are a few of the other gems you can find in the EPA press release: "Today's action will also significantly reduce residues of chlorpyrifos on several foods regularly eaten by children."

What residues? Do we have a "residue" problem? (the answer is "no, we don't"). Also, where is the study that shows which foods are "regularly eaten by children?"

EPA administrator Carol M. Browner is quoted as saying, "Now that we have completed the most extensive scientific evaluation ever conducted on the poten-

tial health hazards of a pesticide . . ." What "evaluation?" I've been looking for four weeks and can't find evidence of any studies conducted on Dursban by the EPA for the FQPA. I ask Administrator Browner, were these supposed studies more "extensive" than the evidence offered by 35 years of safe and effective use in this and over 80 other countries?

Here's another: "Exposure to these kinds of pesticides can cause neurological effects." Notice the careful wording. It doesn't say "neurological harm" or "damage." What the heck is a "neurological effect?"

I would also like to remind the EPA and the Clinton-Gore Administration that we are talking about a pesticide here, not a food supplement. It is *supposed* to kill things. When used correctly, it kills things that can cause disease and death. Yes, even sickness and death in children.

Since you won't find them in any of the EPA materials I've seen, here are a few facts about Dursban and the new rules that I have come across:

- One of the most widely used homeowner applied pesticides in the world, will no longer be available for homeowner use in the USA after existing stocks have been depleted.

- This action is not based on any new study or new information. Dursban has been around for over 30 years and is the most tested pesticide on the market. Nothing new has been added to what we already know about this substance.

- There is not one case — not one — of any person, child or adult, being harmed by the proper use of Dursban. (In a *Seattle Times* article following the EPA announcement, William O. Robertson — for 30 years the director of a Poison Control Center — offered that he could not recall a single incident of a Dursban-caused illness).

- There are thousands of people who rely on this product to safely and effectively protect themselves and their families from such pests as fire ants, cockroaches, stinging insects, fleas, spiders and ticks, not to mention the protection from termites. (In the same *Seattle Times* article, Mr. Robertson says that they see very few incidents of pesticide exposures



of any kind, but they do see numerous cases of insect bites and bee stings. He estimates that for every call they receive about pesticide exposure, they receive 100 about insect bites.)

- Over 200 individuals testified in EPA hearings on the benefits of Dursban; everyone from lawn care operators to homeowners and even a kid who was bitten by a brown recluse spider.

- All studies (over 3600 to date) show that Dursban does not travel to ground water, and that it breaks down on site (through microorganisms and UV radiation). After it dries, tests repeatedly show it does not transfer.

- Dursban has never been shown to be carcinogenic to humans.

- The much reported info that Dursban has been shown to cause neuro-problems in rats is not new information. Forget the fact that there is much evidence that the rat study does not transfer to humans. To replicate the dosage given to the rats in that study, you would have

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to do an indoor application of Dursban over an entire home every three minutes over 500 times in a row. If you did that with Cheez Whiz it would probably kill you.

So, the facts are that there is no new information about Dursban. No one has been harmed by it. It is not harmful to the environment. And yet, we can thank "Clinton-Gore" for protecting our "chil-

dren." I hope we can all remember to blame "Clinton-Gore" for the pain and suffering experienced next year by all the people (including the "children") who will be bitten by brown recluse spiders, stinging wasps and lyme ticks.

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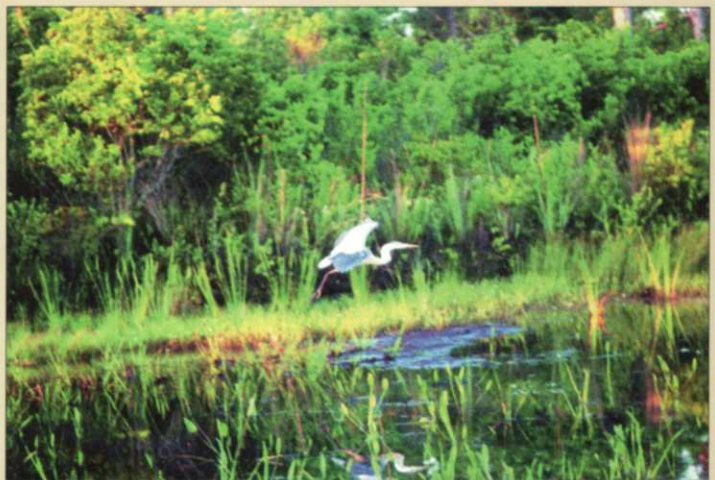


**Editor's  
Choice**  
*Best overall  
photograph*  
*Birdbath by Mike  
Hamilton, Foxfire  
C.C.*



## 6th Annual Florida Green Photo Contest

The winners this year were chosen for a combination of technical quality and originality. Mike Hamilton continues to be in the right place at the right time to shoot the most intriguing photo to capture his second consecutive Editor's Choice Award.



### Wildlife

*Includes mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.*

*Left, 1st Place: The Sentinel by John Stach, Olde Hickory G. & C.C. Above, 2nd Place: The Habitat at Valkaria by Lyne Page, The Habitat G.C.*





**Formal Plantings**

*Includes annuals, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee signs.*

*1st Place: Formal Tee by Mike Hamilton, Foxfire C.C.*

**Native Plantings**  
*Includes aquatic vegetation, grasses, shrubs, trees and wildflowers.*



*Above, 1st Place: Build It And They Will Come by John Stach, Olde Hickory G. & C.C.*

*Left, 2nd Place: Sun Catchers by Lyne Page, The Habitat G.C.*







Above, 1st Place: *The Day Begins*  
by Mike Hamilton, Foxfire C.C.

Right, 2nd Place: *The 18th Hole*  
by John Stach, Olde Hickory G & C.C.



**Scenic Hole Layout**  
*Includes sunrises, sunsets,  
frosts, storms and any other  
golf hole view.*

## Call For Articles

This is a call for articles for the 2001 issues of the Florida Green.

Contact Joel D. Jackson, Editor for more information. Phone: 407-248-1971. Fax: 407-248-1971. E-mail; FLGrn@aol.com. All slides and photographs should include identification of persons in the picture and the name of the photographer.

**HANDS ON TOPICS:** Share your best practices and tips for these upcoming topics. Slides or photographs are encouraged.

- **Winter 2001** - Personal Financial Planning
- **Spring 2001** - Fertility Programs
- **Summer 2001** - Utility Vehicles

• **Fall 2001** - Computers as Management Tools

**SPOTLIGHT:** People and events making news in Florida. From award winners to chapter tournaments and other accomplishments. Send in your story.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S JOURNAL:** Personal observations or experiences related to any phase of the turf management profession.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** General management topics beyond turf. Examples: Education, facilities, personnel, computers, training, etc.

**INDUSTRY NEWS:** News items of interest to Florida superintendents from allied associations in the turf/ horticulture industry.

**OPINION:** Exactly what it means! Articles voicing a personal point of view on any topic concerning Florida superintendents.

**RESEARCH:** A section reserved primarily for university and technical authors to report on research results within the turf industry. Also reports of practical on-course testing.

**RUB OF THE GREEN:** Articles and anecdotes with a humorous twist.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Superintendents are invited to submit ideas and articles about environmental issues and initiatives at their courses.

**Wanted: Slides and photographs to help tell the stories!**



**M**y tenure as president of the Florida Turfgrass Association came to an end Aug. 15 at the annual Conference and Show. I want to personally thank Darren Davis and the entire Florida GCSA Board for their ardent support over the past year, and new FGCSA President Cary Lewis for offering me the post of FTGA Committee chairman to continue strengthening the cooperative bonds between the two associations. I am very proud that golf course superintendents

are the largest and most active segment of the FTGA, and I hope it always stays that way.

Though I've said it before in this column many times, it bears repeating that it is in the best interests of all superintendents to align ourselves with other turfgrass professionals for the increased political clout we can muster together, and for the talent and energy that these other

professionals can bring to bear on our mutual problems. One only needs to see new FTGA President Erica Santella of TruGreen-ChemLawn in action at a regulatory meeting about fertilizer or pesticide applications for irrefutable proof. I think it fair to say that neither the FGCSA nor the FTGA has had a significant accomplishment based solely on the associations' strength and reputation — strong individuals have made things happen, but neither association has yet really come of age.

If these comments seem unimportant to you, then I don't think you've been paying attention to what's going on in the golf and turf industry. Why is it that management companies are proliferating? Why are there no increases in the number of rounds played in the U.S. since 1988 despite the fact that about 5,000 new golf courses have opened for play? Why does the public still think that golf courses are bad for the environment? Why does the EPA interpret risk analysis data differently from the manufacturers? Why are there anti-golf and anti-science groups

destroying turfgrass research plots? Why did the National Audubon Society *censure* and *sue* Ron Dodson's Audubon International for trying to work with golf courses through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program?

We are still a weak and fragmented group of professionals who are more reactive than proactive because the vast majority of our peers choose not to help those of us who are trying to help shape and secure our futures as golf and turf professionals. Perhaps the time has come to consider following the lead of the Seven Rivers GCSA and make membership in FTGA mandatory for membership in one of the chapters of the FGCSA, just as chapter membership is necessary for membership in the GCSAA. You are helping yourself, your peers, and your industry just by joining, even if you have little time to participate.

Our cooperative efforts have helped move the University of Florida turfgrass program toward preeminence in the country. We are cooperating with other professional turfgrass-related associations on advisory boards and future cooperative trade shows. We have just begun an ambitious fund-raising program targeting golfers spearheaded by Don Benham and UF's Dr. Terril Nell. We recently created a Best Management Practices committee to clear up ambiguous and/or conflicting BMPs for turf, but even more significantly, to engage regulatory agencies in the creation of BMPs so that a united front can be maintained against the local and regional Napoleon and Hitler politicians who pop up on a regular basis.

I am especially encouraged about the potential benefits to our industry by working with regulatory agency representatives on this new BMP committee. I have always espoused the opinion that we need to educate the general public about our industry to reverse our generally poor environmental image, but the costs to do so have always been prohibitive. I now feel that we may be able to accomplish as much by educating and working with the regulatory agencies, a task within our abilities and budget.

There is no "us" and "them" in regards to the FGCSA and the FTGA — each association has its own mission, but both associations share the same goals. More superintendents need to realize this. 🐾

*Time to  
come  
together*

## Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCSA

*What  
A  
Good  
Egg I  
AM*

**Green  
Side Up**



Joel Jackson, CGCS  
Editor

**I**'m not having an ego crisis. I just thought with all the water, fertilizer and chemical issues coming down on us lately that it was time to have some fun and keep our sense of humor intact. So with apologies to Dr. Suess, I present for your consideration:

Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam.  
What a good egg I am  
While some may not give a hoot.  
I would not, I could not, I do not  
pollute

So why did Al and Carol say  
Down! Down! With Dursban spray  
Save the birds. Save the squirrels  
Save the little boys and girls

But Al. Big Al. You're not my pal  
Dursban never hurt a guy or gal  
Never hurt fish or fowl  
So why, oh why do you howl

Save the world you sermonize  
Pesticides you demonize  
Being green is never easy  
But your version makes me queasy

Take your pompous explanations  
With all naive incantations  
And when the volcano blows  
Clear that air with regulations

Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam  
What a good egg I am  
I do not foul lake or stream  
I play on the Steward's team

Mother Nature isn't wacky  
She's no Greenie's stupid lacky  
When she plays she plays to win  
Politics is not the game she's in

What's your team Al  
What's your game  
EPA science  
Is awfully lame

We never treat  
All our acres  
You'd never know it  
From the data fakers

You talk of risk  
With no reward  
But you never managed  
A verdant sward

You only want to get a vote  
All you're getting is my goat  
Well better goat than vote  
I note

Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam  
What a good egg I am  
I'm not some mean old coot  
I would not, I could not, I do not  
pollute

We will always keep the green side up,  
even if Big Al and EPA make it harder to  
do sometimes. Now all of a sudden I'm  
hungry for some green eggs and ham.