

# Iowa Alliance of Environmental Concerns urges, 'Avoid our mistakes'

By MARK LESLIE

DES MOINES, Iowa — Agriculture and turfgrass industries in other states, perhaps less potent than here, could learn from Iowa's mistakes as well as its success, said Mona Bond, executive secretary of the Iowa Alliance of Environmental Concerns (IaAEC).

• IaAEC gained a crucial boost to its momentum last fall when the Iowa golf course superintendents' and lawn-care professionals' associations both voted to donate a portion of each member's dues to the alliance. This made each association member also a member of the IaAEC.

"That's big kudos," Watters said. "We went from 30 golf courses that would donate \$65 every year to having 350 to 400 members just from the golf course side."

• "In an ideal world, you would go to the horticulture industry and bring in at least all the commercial entities under one umbrella because of the commonality on the two issues [pesticide and fertilizer use]," Bond said. "In Iowa perhaps the groundwork wasn't done well enough. That was their intent. But with personalities, etc., it didn't work. Now we work for the turf industry and in coalition with fruit and vegetable growers and others in the horticulture industry. If we have a long-term goal, it would be to unite those industries and have two lobbyists instead of one... It's tough to have a personal relationship with 150 legislators."

• The pest-control association does not belong to IaAEC, although the large manufacturers are members, individually, of the alliance.

• Watters noted that "there can be some hostility between the horticulture and agriculture sectors because the ag sector is monitored more by the federal government and we're monitored more by the state. From time to time that can be frustrating, to say the least."

• But, as it operates, the alli-

ance does not get involved in issues on which member groups don't all agree.

"Each of the groups can determine a specific agenda," Bond said. "For three or four years, when we wanted state regulation of pesticides and fertilizers, that was the number-one priority of the group. If, for instance,

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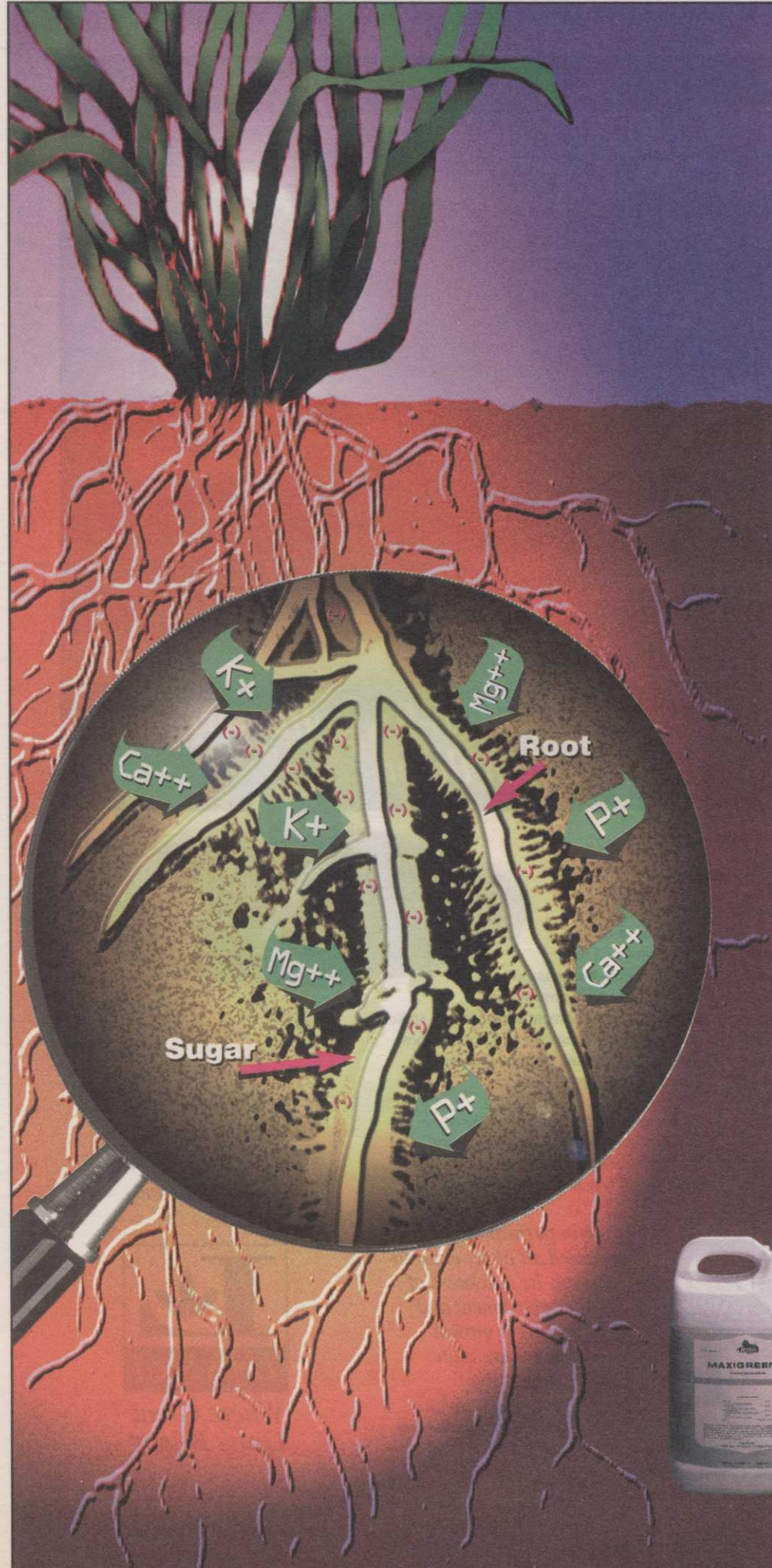
— Mona Bond

the superintendents have an issue they want that is not in conflict with other members, the alliance will lobby that issue."

Bond sends members material every week or two "so we know what's happening and if we need to contact our legislators," said Watters. "She'll let us know and tell us what points we have to hit.

I'm sure everyone in the country will face the same battles. And I think we [in Iowa] will fight the same battles in 10 years that we fight now. We will be fighting home rule, for instance.

"But the more you're informed on what your legislators are doing, the less likely someone will dump a new law on you."



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according to Watters. "When we call, they can put a name to a group," he said.

Bond recalled the alliance's impact on the home rule debate.

"When you tie together the alliance's 537 members and 1,700 agribusiness members, it becomes a grassroots ground swell," she said. "Legislators told us, 'Please don't get your members to call us again. We get the point.' It made a huge difference."