

EDITOR'S CORNER

By Tom Parent
River Oaks Golf Course



A written rebuttal to "Who's Idea Was This Anyway? According to the response I have received via E-mail, phone and in-person, our chapter should have voted 95% against the by-law changes and 5% for it. I think I'll start writing articles that I think everyone should agree with me on and I'll probably get an overwhelmingly negative response.

In the Lions Den

On the 23rd of April I attended a seminar sponsored by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The speaker was Mr. Brian Detzler who is the parks director for the City of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. The subject was how the Waterloo parks department had reduced its pesticide usage for 90% of the acres maintained to .25%. This was done using a program called the Plant Health Care Program.

The Plant Health Care Program is different from IMP in the fact it tries to prevent problems proactively instead of monitoring and treating as needed like you would find in an IPM approach.

Unfortunately some of the strategies such as mowing rye/blue grass at three and one-quarter inches and routine "rest days" would not apply to golf courses.

In addition to raised mowing height, another basic strategy was very aggressive aerification. They aerified their sports fields twice a month, alternating core aerification with spiking, using an airway. At River Oaks we can attest to the value of this approach. We have aerated with "mini" tines on a monthly basis for the last several years with great success.

I had expected to be attending this seminar with fellow turf professionals. As it turns out I saw only four persons from our profession and a few other "Green Space Managers" (I like that term for our profession). The rest of the audience was comprised of very hard core environmentalists and their "guest." By hard core, I mean "All pesticides are toxic and will lead to the extinction of our race." Yes, that is a quote.

I had the pleasure of engaging in a debate with several of these well-intentioned zealots. As one was finishing off her vegetarian lunch from a caterer that specializes in organic food, I mentioned that she had just eaten insecticides, and fungicides that if presented for EPA approval would never make it on the market.

She looked at me like I was nuts! I continued with the question: How do you think plants defend themselves? . . . Magic? I wanted to continue with the fact that coffee and table salt are more toxic than most chemicals used on turf but I knew the route was hopeless.

She started quoting authors that in my readings on alternative management practices I recognized as well . . .

less than scientific shall we say. Her point was that pesticides destruction of the human races would be brought about by the disruption of our endochrin system (hormones, etc.)

I later mentioned to her that one of the primary winter feeds of livestock in England was turnips which contain a chemical that would never pass through the EPA. I continued with the fact that this chemical can and does inhibit reproduction (endochrin drivin system) in the livestock. It is the same chemical(s) that are found in broccoli and give it its nasty odor and the snap in its taste. (That's why George Bush and I are such sensible men.)

Again, she looked at me like I was nuts (Not all that uncommon of a reaction, really) and this time with the disdain you would give a small child. It was clear to her that I understood nothing. It was like debating politics with my mother-in-law (Whom I love dearly). She's right, I'm wrong. Talk all you want to but you won't change her mind. Or to quote my best friend's best line "I'm sorry but you're wrong."

I was going to rebut her again by asking if she'd like me to sprinkle some rotenone, neem oil or nicotine on her salad but decided that I would have been wasting my time. These people believe what they want to believe and refuse to even think about anything else. With any luck, she will think twic about what I said the next time she eats her organically grown broccoli salad.

If you read my articles you already know I'm a spray at last resorter. I also believe pesticides are overused by some green space managers (it does have a nice ring to it) and as a result the reputation of our whole profession suffers.

What I also know is that no matter how proficient we become at managing our golf courses with reduced chemicals, I for one will always have a couple of gallons of subdue and a case or two of daconil in the chemical storage locker. After all, what's better for the environment, bare soil or treated turf?

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I have had several requests to get a list of E-mail addresses put together for MGCSA members. If you are interested in sharing your E-mail address with your fellow members we will publish it in the July issue. Just send it to me at this address: (tparent@minn.net)

MEMBER-GENERATED ARTICLES

Articles written by members are the key to the success of a publication such as *Hole Notes*. We listen to each other's ideas and trust each other's common sense and advice, so why not share it? An experience of a superintendent at one golf course may be of use to a fellow superintendent at another course. *Hole Notes* needs you to put down those thoughts on paper and welcomes your suggestions for articles. Please contact Tom Parent, Editor, *Hole Notes*.

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