

is an expression that carpenters use to make this same point.

The next step is evaluating the results of those actions. Let's face it—learning from your mistakes is not as easy as it sounds. Evaluation takes patience. You have to develop a sense for how long to wait and see—how long to give the action you took before you do something else.

Honest evaluation requires both the courage of convictions—the ability to make decisions—and the humility required to recognize when those convictions and decisions didn't work. Even scientists, who work by conducting experiments and drawing conclusions from the results, frequently have difficulty admitting their errors. The process can take generations. The diagnostic art is not something that can be handed down wholesale from one individual to another—especially given today's rate of change. Today's latest discovery may become tomorrow's discarded fallacy. That's why keeping up—continuing education—is important in virtually every field of endeavor.

Classroom learning can help. Books or magazines—or newsletters like this one—can help. But diagnosing complex diseases in the field—where the full array of environmental and site-specific factors and co-factors are at play—takes something more than second-hand knowledge, however accurate or insightful it may be. After all, the field is where many a theory has been disproved, many a product has failed to produce the sought-after result, and many decisions have to be made right now—no matter how little or how much we think we know about turf management.

So diagnosing turf problems takes a personal awareness of what is going on around you. Doing it well takes digging, probing, smelling, feeling, reading, and getting your hands and your knees dirty. You have to be willing to ask questions and—somehow—know when to accept the conventional wisdom and when to reject it in favor of your own gut feeling.

As with all skills, some people are better at it than others. Diagnosing problems is a skill that grows through personal experience. It can be aided by the growing body of knowledge about turf and its ecology, but nothing can replace it. ■

## Turf Grass TRENDS



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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## REGULATORY WATCH



### Federal legislation tops summer regulatory agenda

TWO IMPORTANT, RELATED PIECES of legislation are working their way through the Congressional committee process this summer: the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the Pesticide Safety Improvement Act (HR3742).

FIFRA, which includes rules governing certification and training, is up for re-authorization. The key features of the Pesticide Safety Improvement Act include:

- REQUIRING MORE TRAINING for commercial pesticide applicators
- INCREASING FINES FOR VIOLATIONS
- PRE-EMPTYING OF LOCAL PESTICIDE USE regulations with state and federal rules.

The law would also require training of state enforcement personnel.

Both bills have the support of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). In testimony before the sub-committee on Department Operations Research and Foreign Agriculture (DORFA), PLCAA supported increased training requirements; customer right-to-know, notification of application, and customer service agreement rules; and national regulation of the lawn care industry. It opposed increased fines, which would be raised from \$5,000 to \$25,000 by the currently proposed version of HR3742.

Right to know regulations are currently administered under the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act, which primarily focuses on the storage of toxic chemicals, and PLCAA testified that FIFRA is a more suitable place for these regulations. Right-to-know and related rules are particularly important to the lawn care industry, because of its visibility—to both customers and neighboring non-customers.

For additional information, or to add your voice to lobbying efforts, regarding these bills, contact your U.S. Representative's office. ■

### ASK THE EXPERT

HAVE A QUESTION on any aspect of turf management? Send it to: Ask the Expert, *Turf Grass Trends*, 2070 Naamans Rd., Suite 110, Wilmington DE 19810-2644 or fax it to (302) 475-8450. If we can't answer your question, we will put it to the best available expert on the subject.