

sively as 2,4-D and after many years of review by federal and private agencies no evidence of it causing cancer or birth defects has been substantiated. The great preponderance of evidence indicates that 2,4-D poses less risk to human health than almost any commercial pesticide marketed in the US. True, 2,4-D was one of three or four components of infamous 'agent orange' but it was never shown to be the cause of problems associated with its use. A dioxin contaminant of another herbicide component, 2,4,5-T, ostensibly was the cause of most health problems experienced by the native Vietnam populations and US soldiers. Linking 2,4-D with cancer and birth defects is clearly not supported by any reputable literature and one wonders why the authors make the statement at all.

This latter point is what bothers me most about *Redesigning the American Lawn*. The book appears to be well researched and is written by respected academicians and yet it contains many statements which are not supported by the preponderance of published literature or even by the primary literature they cite. It almost appears that the authors knew the arguments they wanted to make and gleaned from the literature statements which appeared to support their position. Little matter

that statements were taken from old, largely discredited studies or that most recent research was largely ignored. Any graduate student who destroyed most of his data and saved only that which supported his hypothesis would be thrown out on his ear by any reputable university. One might ask why such selective reporting of the scientific literature is acceptable when writing for the general public. I also question how well students are being introduced to the scientific method when such selective interpretation of scientific data is practiced.

Unfortunately this apparently biased reporting of the scientific literature is characteristic of much popular environmental writing. Bringing valid environmental issues to the public's attention is not well served by this practice. It may even contribute to a growing cynical view that most environmental problems are grossly overstated and serve only special interests. This is clearly not what the authors of such pieces intend but it is the inevitable consequence of departing from scientific objectivity. I am sorry to say that, its several virtues notwithstanding, *Redesigning the American Lawn* is a less than objective analysis of the environmental impacts of lawns and their management.

---

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

# American Society of Agronomy Publications

**The Botanical Characteristics of Turfgrasses.** Color slides from across the nation explore the botany of vegetative grasses, regions of adaptation, and identification of cool-season and warm-season turfgrasses and weeds. Designed for college and short-course students. *Set of 81 slides.* \$30.00. ISBN 0-89118-513-5.

**Microbiology of Turf Soils.** Slide presentation is a simplified soil microbiology and biochemistry series that investigates the organisms that live in turf soils. Designed for high schools, junior colleges, and university classes maintenance personnel, and garden clubs. *Set of 81 slides.* \$30.00. ISBN 0-89118-512-7.

**Diseases of Turfgrasses on CD-ROM.** Focuses on the most widespread diseases. Includes a narrative and 80 images on one CD-ROM. \$30.00. ISBN 0-89118-510-0.

**Maintenance of Athletic Turf on CD-ROM.** Introduces management practices for athletic fields. Includes management, cultural practices, pre- and post-event care for game and practice fields. Includes a narrative and 79 images on one CD-ROM. \$30.00. ISBN 0-89118-520-8.

*To-order call the Book Order Dept. at ASA /CSSA/SSSA Headquarters, (608) 273-8080, e-mail: books@agronomy.org.*