

LETTERS

You can't call them neglected, yet it seems they are taking a back seat. Perhaps by default the vast majority of professionals working in the park and large area grounds management field seem to consistently come in second.

First, despite the fact that there are many more thousands of grounds managers outside golf than in it, turf research still seems orientated toward the golf superintendent (and the home owner) almost entirely. There is a good reason why firms underwriting research, angle grants in that direction — a lot of money is spent by these two groups. In the case of the golf superintendents, they are a well organized "lobby" for their needs in turf. We can't fault this. It is exactly what they should be doing, but perhaps more balance is needed.

The thousands of others in parks and grounds need the best their budgets can buy. For instance, aggressive varieties which can make it without a lot of water, or more varieties resistant to the perils of the city — salt, smog, being badly trampled. And have we given up on growth retardants?

Secondly, in our view, both the park and grounds managers are highly trained professionals. This is not the view of the public. Budgets often put them at the bottom, many times with severe cuts from the committees who should know the vital roles they play. The public feels that their principal function is to cut grass and dispose of refuse.

In the past, many department heads then started at the bottom and hung on until seniority brought them the top job. No more. Your typical park or campus administrator is a true professional with four to six or more years of college level training, plus experience. The problem is an individual one which each administrator must solve.

Public relations is the key. Most administrators rate it low in priority, but the ones who have done a good job of it, have achieved professional status. Good relations with the local press, a record of articles published, awards won, talks presented at state and national conferences all show the professional training and result in raises, promotion and good

budgets for the department.

We'd like to see more expertise on the part of the park administrator and a high priority put on "image." It would benefit parks. The

same goes for campus and other grounds managers.

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Editor, *Park Maintenance*

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