

A final note on women

I'm no Gallup, but while tracking down women superintendents, I started taking a poll. I asked men in the green industry—superintendents, researchers, executives—to name women in their business.

Most just shook their heads. It wasn't clear if they just didn't know any, or if the whole concept bothered them.

The impact of women in the green industry can no longer be ignored.

Take the seed market, for example. Three major seed manufacturers have their daughters working in highly visible positions: Gayle Jacklin, marketing for Jacklin Seed; Sheri Burlingham, domestic sales manager for E.F. Burlingham and Sons; and Crystal Rose-Fricker, plant breeder with Tee-2-Green Corp.

Although it's still rare to see women Ph.D.s in turf programs at universities, there are some: Dr. Pat Vittum, turf entomologist, University of Massachusetts; Dr. Pat Cobb, extension entomologist, Auburn University; and Dr. Jackie Mullen, plant pathologist, Auburn, to name a few.

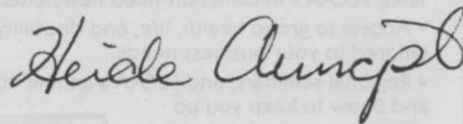
Jack Murray, (USDA-Beltsville), tells about the time he and research plant pathologist Nikkii O'Neill went to look at turf disease problems at Burning Tree Country Club in Silver Springs, where the male elite of Congress play golf. O'Neill was the first woman allowed on the course. University of Maryland researchers can't even consult on the "men-only" course during state time.

With qualified women working in the industry, it's time golf courses stopped discriminating in hiring women as superintendents. (Not to mention that women should be allowed to join that club).

Such prejudice exists in corporations, as well. I heard that the president of a major green industry company refuses to hire women, because of the poor performance of one woman in his company.

How often has a man's work suffered from a personal problem such as a rocky marriage or relative's death? With the industry 95 percent male, those cases seem scarce among men who are hard workers. When one of the comparatively few women in the industry makes a mistake, it can reflect poorly on all women.

It may be an Olympic task for women to break the barriers that have kept them out of the green industry. But, women are succeeding.



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