

# LETTERS

## Women in turf

To the editors:

Thank you so much for your article about Virgie Ross. She has been my hero since I met her at the Iowa State Turf Conference two years ago. I am responsible for 60 acres of turf and ornamentals at an Iowa technical college. After two years of sexist jokes, unintentional snubs and smashed fingers, I was ready to go back to being a cocktail waitress. Virgie, right in the middle of the conference, convinced me I would be accepted, and I was.

The rewards of a turf career far outweigh the "barrier breaking" I have had to do. Now, entering my fifth season should qualify me for your "turf lady list." I would not trade my big Jake or my 72-inch Toro for any other job I have considered.

**Jane Ferch**

*Hawkeye Institute of Technology  
Waterloo, Iowa*

To the editors:

I found the "It's No Joke" article by Heide Aungst all too close to home. I see many of the same problems faced by women superintendents only amplified in the lawn care industry.

We have a very hard time holding on to female specialists. I know that the hours are long and hard, but I feel the poor attitude of most customers has a more dramatic effect.

The female employees that I have been associated with in both the lawn and ornamental fields have usually been far superior technically than most of the male employees, but usually there is little respect for them by homeowners.

You constantly get asked, "Why would a woman want to do that job?" Obviously, these narrow-minded individuals have never experienced the true enjoyment and rewards of the green industry.

**Gary Curtis**

*Chemlawn  
Chesterfield, Mo.*

To the editors:

I just wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoyed your feature on women in the December issue of WEEDS TREES & TURF. Being a woman personally involved in the turfgrass field, I was delighted to see this feature. I grew up on a golf course where my father was the superintendent and spent every summer I can remember working on a golf course crew. I received my B.S. in turf management from Mississippi State University and am currently finishing work on my M.S., in turf, at MSU. I plan to begin work on my Ph.D. at another university in the fall.

I know how frustrating it can be to be a woman in this field, but I also know it's very rewarding. I'm so glad that you made the effort to spotlight women in the turfgrass industry. I've often been apprehensive

about my own career goals, but your feature, and particularly your final note in the "Outlook" section, has given me new incentive and made me even more determined to achieve those goals. Thank you so much for supporting all the women in our industry.

**Melodie L. Kemp**

*Mississippi State University  
Mississippi State, Miss.*

To the editors:

I was excited to see a feature article on women involved in grounds care professionally in the December issue. I enjoyed reading about the three women as golf course superintendents. I have experienced many of the same frustrations they have in my career development. But I must express one concern: why was it necessary to use a model for the cover photo? Why weren't the three women discussed in the article used on the cover? Are male models usually used on the cover? I was a little disappointed in this dichotomy from a professional trade magazine.

**Patricia Linton**

*Servicemaster Industries Inc.  
Santa Clara, Calif.*

To the editors:

I am not normally a writer of letters to the editor, but your magazine has irritated me to the point where I can't restrain pen from paper.

The most recent annoyance was your handling of the article on women golf course superintendents. Great article, but why did you choose a model to represent a super rather than put a "real" one on the cover? This seems to be the height of hypocrisy—you state that women can do the work, yet none was worthy of appearing on the cover? With all respect to Ms. Aungst, it appears that your publication is still written by men for men, and until the attitude that women are merely decorations for magazine covers and advertisements (this has improved) changes, I'm afraid that equity in the work place will be far in the future.

Another irritation to me has been what I consider a long-standing anti-environmental slant in your publication. One small example was a recent article on a public garden area in the South (I forget which one) in which the article states that a "useless swamp" was turned into a beautiful garden area. This is a loaded statement which is typical of a narrow-minded attitude that sees nature as being valuable after it has been tamed, manipulated or otherwise become subservient to human control. How about more articles in which natural conditions are accepted and utilized rather than destroyed?

A related concern is the constant reinforcement of the chemical industry's philosophy that they are the sole authority on what is harmful or good for the environment. Perhaps the chemical industries overall record is good, but when errors are made, the

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consequences are often serious or disastrous. The citizen has the right to decide what gets applied in the environment, not the company which is operating primarily out of profit motive. I think you do a disservice by not providing a balanced view of this situation.

I offer these comments in a constructive manner. I think your publication has the ability to influence a large number of people in the industry. Is there any hope for change?

**Dennis Easley**  
Carleton College  
Northfield, Minn.

**Editor's note:** The choice to use a model on the cover of our December issue was strictly one of logistics, not an effort to "juice up" the cover. **WEEDS TREES & TURF's** editorial offices are based in Cleveland, Ohio. Many of our cover shots are done by a professional photographer based in Cleveland. We searched high and low, but could not find a woman super in the greater Cleveland area. The editorial staff, which shoots many of the inside photographs, does not have the skill to take a professional cover shot. We have used male models in the past.

**WEEDS TREES & TURF** strives to report the issues facing the Green Industry in a fair and accurate manner. As far as the chemical industry goes, the Oct. 1986 issue reported on the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and prairies as a natural alternative to highly-manicured turf. The January 1987 issue reported changes in the chemical industry which have taken place over the years, including the recent trend toward searching for biological methods of disease and insect control. We plan more stories along these lines. The facts remain, however, that the majority of landscape managers use chemicals for disease and insect control. Experts tell us that effective natural methods are more than 25 years away. But we promise to report them as they develop.

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