

LETTERS

To the editor:

With due respect to the reports of my contemporaries on the subject of "The Black Death" (August issue), permit me to offer my opinion on the element that seems to be lacking.

Layers occur by intent or by the migration of finer particles. In soil growing media, migration is hindered by the presence of aggregates, produced by the process known as "flocculation," enhanced by the presence of aerobic micro-organisms. In their absence, plants growing in a medium of high rates of infiltration, percolation and drainage, it follows that, with reduced water-holding capacity in the medium, irrigation is needed in quantity. The rapid movement of water tends to assist the finer particles to migrate. In a system that embraces flocculation, it appears that the grape-like clusters of fine particles, acting as large particles with ample pore space, may prevent migration to a considerable degree.

To sustain a thriving biological complex, it is necessary to provide the essential nutrients, which, for the most part, are organic in nature. This implies a totally different system of management, one that is in harmony with the age-old processes of nature.

High sand content of soils in putting greens that were "easy to keep" was a feature of field research conducted at Beltsville in the '50s with co-workers Radko and Wilson. Cup-cutter cores from greens were collected and analyzed for sand content. Low sand content characterized the greens "hard to keep." The "easy to keep" greens showed many large pore spaces in photographs of thin slices of the profile.

This study, lacking final conclusions, was dropped in 1953. It may have contributed to the notion that, if high sand content in a soil is good, why not use all sand? It must be remembered that this was in an area where topdressings contained organic matter and organic fertilizers were in vogue. The biological nature of soil in the "easy to keep" greens was not determined, but it was thought to be high.

Fred V. Grau
Consulting Agronomist
College Park, Md.

To the editor:

Since 1986, I have been increasingly active on a broad range of environmental issues. My experience thus

far indicates that generally speaking, most people who manufacture, distribute, sell and/or apply pesticides are not very interested in alternatives like integrated pest management (IPM).

Officials with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture see no problems at all with the safety of pesticides. If it were not for many concerned individuals, I doubt very seriously that the state would be developing guidelines for monitoring wells for pesticide contamination.

Community feel that many major corporations really don't care about environmental quality, and conversely, organizations like 3PF feel that we environmentalists are a misguided group with sinister motives. Is it any wonder that people on both sides of the fence get frustrated?

I would like to point out that pesticides are not the only reason for problems in the environment. They are, however, part of the problem. We are all responsible for what happens to this planet, individuals as well as industry.

I employ IPM in my business, and have found it to work very well. I use the best cultural practices I am familiar with, and I only use pesticides as a last resort. The only materials I use are insecticidal soap, a sulphur-based fungicide/miticide, dormant oil and strategic use of Roundup. I am doing a lot more hand-weeding, and I intend to use a product called "Sharpshooter" (Safer Co.) for weed control as soon as it is available in concentrate form.

Robert Mulder
Amsterdam Landscaping
Raleigh, N.C.

To the editor:

I sometimes wonder why the controversy exists concerning "VNS" (Variety Not Stated) seed.

For years, the terms "common" or "commercial" existed and described seed which was being sold as seed of that kind. Any reference to variety was reserved for seed being described with a certain variety name, either of pedigreed and sometimes non-pedigreed status.

More recently, sophisticated and astute seed buyers have come to recognize the merits of seed certification, and the guarantees inherent when specifying "certified seed." It would seem that this is all that is really needed; "common" or "commercial" seed to describe any seed which is not

seed of an identifiable variety and one of the pedigreed grades. Pedigree seed merits the variety being part of its name.

"VNS" seems to be some kind of implication that this non-descript seed may possibly possess some varietal traits and characteristics. I do not believe it can be both ways, and disagree with messrs. Olinger and Roberts in attempting to justify anything other than "common" status for "common seed."

Finally, I would point out that it does not really matter whether you are dealing with a "reputable" or "non-reputable" wholesale distributor. If a buyer is not taking advantage of the assurances inherent with pedigree seed, then caveat emptor—buyer beware.

Martin C. Pick
Otto Pick & Sons Seeds
Ontario, Canada

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sional staff to provide specific recommendations and analysis.

The GCSAA reports that the system is expected to cost less than \$1,000, a substantial savings when compared to the cost of an environmental audit, which can exceed \$10,000.

INDUSTRY

Safer adds a pair of new east and west centers

Safer Inc., a leading researcher and manufacturer of naturally-based pesticide and plant care products, is expanding.

Safer has a new west coast distribution center in Ontario, Calif. that serves Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Alaska and Hawaii. This plant will cut deliveries to those states up to seven days.

Safer's new Camp Hill, Pa. facility allows the company to deliver product within three days to New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

Safer, with headquarters in Well-esley, Mass., manufactures and distributes insecticidal soaps, moss and algae killers, a sulfur-based fungicide, a herbicide, insect traps, leaf cleaners and plant protectants to the green industry.

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