



Striking back at industry's 'good friends'

Our "good friends," the environmental activists, just won't give us a break, will they?

If events in northern Ohio are any indication of what's happening around the country, the lawn and landscape industry still has a lot of public relations work remaining.

The most recent abomination to appear in this part of the country was an editorial in the Cleveland Plain Dealer emblazoned with the headline "Watch out for toxic lawns" in no less than 48-point type. The author was identified as Kim Hill, a self-proclaimed "environmental activist" who, for years, has been a thorn in the side of the Ohio Pesticide Applicators for Responsible Regulation (OPARR).

About once a year, the outspoken Mr. Hill dredges up every conceivable piece of bad publicity the pesticide industry has endured since 1980, and assembles an article for the PD or any other such mass disseminator of information irresponsible enough to publicly air his distorted claims.

In the "toxic lawn" article, Hill resurrected the case of Navy Lt. George Prior, the National Cancer Institute's Kansas study, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, Agent Orange, diazinon waterfowl kills and—of course—the ghost of Spike the English bulldog.

The article concluded with this:

"Thousands of miniature Spikes now stand guard on poisoned lawns all across Ohio, warning of the danger. The ghost dog on each sign silently accuses the thoughtless people who order lawn chemicals, applicators who spread the poisons, and companies that threaten our health for financial gain."

This blatant emotional appeal aside, the article's bigger threat came from the author's failure to paint the entire picture in almost every instance.

So this intrepid editor—a self-proclaimed "environmental activist" in his own right—journeyed into the nether world of newspapers where, in another life, he once claimed a rightful spot and even won a few awards for his reporting and writing.

A three-and-a-half page letter refuting and clarifying every point of contention made by the illustrious Mr. Hill was written. To insure its validity, I enlisted the help of Elliot Maras, former editor of LAWN CARE INDUSTRY magazine, and Paul Skorupa of the Pesticide Public Policy Foundation (PPPF).

Five days after it was placed in the mail, I phoned the paper to see if, possibly, perchance, my letter would ever see the light of day again.

My phone call was answered with a recording: "Hope we haven't left you on hold so long that it seems like you've drifted out to sea..."

(To be continued)

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