

# LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

is a proud member of these  
green industry professional  
organizations:

## ALCA

**Associated Landscape Contractors of America**, 405 N. Washington St., Falls Church, VA 22046; (703) 241-4004.

**American Sod Producers Association**, 1855-A Hicks Rd., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008; (708) 705-9898.

**Golf Course Superintendents Association of America**, 1421 Research Park Dr., Lawrence, KS 66049-3859; (913) 841-2240.

**International Society of Arboriculture**, P.O. Box 908, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 328-2032.

**International Turfgrass Society**, Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences, VPI-SU, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0403; (703) 231-9796.

**National Arborist Association**, The Meeting Place Mall, P.O. Box 1094, Amherst, NH 03031-1094; (603) 673-3311.

**National Golf Foundation**, 1150 South U.S. Highway One, Jupiter, FL 33477; (407) 744-6006.

**Ohio Turfgrass Foundation**, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus, OH 43210; (614) 292-2601.

## PGMS

**Professional Grounds Management Society**, 10402 Ridgland Rd., Suite 4, Cockeysville, MD 21030; (301) 667-1833.



**Professional Lawn Care Association of America**, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112; (404) 977-5222.

**Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment**, 1155 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 296-6085.



**Sports Turf Managers Association**, P.O. Box 98056, Las Vegas, NV 89193-8056; (702) 739-8052.

**Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association**, 8500 Normandale Lake Blvd., Suite 1200, Bloomington, MN 55437; (612) 831-8515.

## AS WE SEE IT

JERRY ROCHE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



### Public relations: we're still not doing enough

Spring is just around the corner. And you know what that means: the media muck-rakers will be pounding on your door, asking pointed (and usually leading) questions about that smelly, noxious *stuff* you're spreading all over the place.

"In our polls, readers say they want to read more about environmental issues," says Tim Wheeler, environmental reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*. "They (the public) don't think government is tough enough (on these issues), so you can guess what the future holds for you."

Yes, Tim, we know. We know about the hatchet jobs that have been done on the industry in the past by *USA Today*, *Home Mechanix*, *20/20* and other media.

"Sometimes we do a good job, sometimes we don't," Wheeler admits. "We only have a limited time and space to boil down issues and do justice to all the complexities."

Adds Scott Broom of WMAR-TV, Baltimore: "The reality is that most people have lawns and that's why we spend so much time talking about them."

But the problem lies not in the publishing and broadcasting industries: it lies in the green industry. That problem is spawned by an utter lack of communication with customers, the media, and government legislators. (And before you green industry mavens take issue with that statement, you had better look at the ratio of positive to negative press and legislation you've been saddled with over the past five or six years.)

*Whatever the green industry is doing, it's simply not enough.*

"I hadn't thought about the benefits of what you're doing until I read this pamphlet from the Lawn Institute," says Bob Mead of Smith-Mead Public Relations, Baltimore. "You're unsung heroes."

Hooray. Have we actually begun to make an impact?

Not really. For public opinion is a very nebulous, mercurial thing. We may have

effectively swatted a fly here or there. But we've never really found the nest.

And the media aren't about to help us.

"There is an issue of responsibility that rests with the editor and reporter. It's never our job to buy into everything that's told us," says Broom. "So that sets up an adversarial relationship right away."

Adds the ever-pragmatic Wheeler:

"There is always going to be a lack of full knowledge. It's up to us to get the information. But we have to make decisions every day based on the knowledge we do have."

Wheeler, Mead and Broom, sitting on a panel at the Maryland Turfgrass Conference, made these suggestions:

1) "You need to work on direct communication with your customers through newsletters, brochures, videos." (Mead)

2) "Take the responsibility to write letters to the editor, call in to talk radio shows, distribute fact sheets." (Mead)

3) "IPM and nutrient management is catching on. It makes environmental and good business sense." (Wheeler)

4) "Be prepared to talk about the positives. Be prepared to speak almost in clichés. You need to get your point across in a sentence, a metaphor." (Broom)

5) "Chemicals are very hard to deal with. People are scared of death of chemicals. So it may make more sense to talk about turf." (Broom)

6) "Don't ever say any more than what your message is. That's hard to do. It becomes almost surreal to try to manipulate the media. There is no way to control an interview." (Broom)

Finally, adds Mead (a man who should know): "You must remember this: the press always has the last word."

Jerry Roche  
Editor-in-Chief