

3) The general community should be targeted with well publicized programs, events and accomplishments. Local papers, posters in visible locations and mailers could be used to distribute educational and outreach information. Not only will these efforts reach the entire community, but they will lend recognition and credibility to your program in the eyes of the budgetary decision makers.

An effective, broad-range outreach program also will validate the importance of your services and increase the enthusiasm of both the staff involved in the programs and of your key supporters.

Act now!—Start today with a new attitude and commitment toward community relations. Encourage interaction with the public. Promote volunteerism and help coordinate volunteer activities to accomplish clearly-defined goals. Involve facility users in decisions.

Be visible, with speeches at local schools and

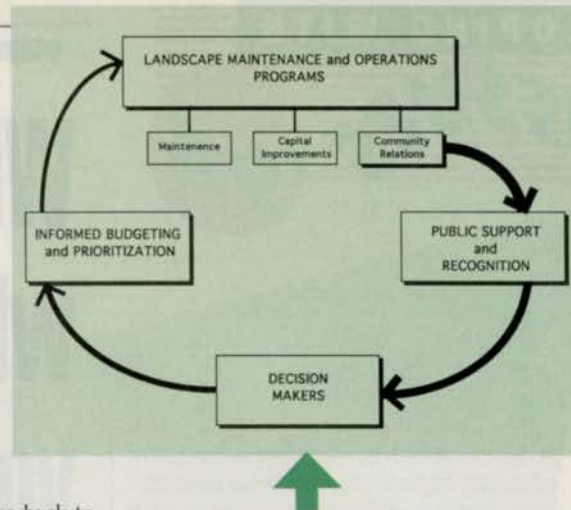
community service clubs, or sponsor tree plantings.

Keep news of your company out there, with a calendar of events and progress reports on special projects. Publicize your successes through local newspapers, radio and TV stations.

If we believe in the work we do, we need to come out of the woods and into the clearing to educate and inform our clients so they can then make informed decisions.

If we are successful, we can turn back to the community and ask for their assistance by putting down the budget axe.

—The author is grounds operations manager for the University of California, Davis, physical plant, and a past board member of the National Sports Turf Managers Association.



When community relations works, you get support from the public decision makers. Explain the need for continued landscape management programs.

Beware public perceptions



by James E. Guyette

How pesticide applications are perceived by the public is an issue that should be addressed daily, says Dr. Bill Pound, turfgrass research associate at Ohio State University.

Fears can be abated and clients better served by taking more care in avoiding high drift situations, Pound says.

"As we get into lower-volume applications, drift becomes more of a concern," reports Pound, who conducted a seminar sponsored by the Associated Green Industries of Northeastern Ohio.

When smaller chemical tanks are carried onto properties, there's a tendency to increase the sprayer pressure to compensate, notes Pound. This sends out smaller droplets that are oh-so-eager to blow into unwanted areas. A 2 gal./1000 sq.ft. mixing ratio that includes larger droplet sizes will help reduce the risks.

In addition to needlessly alarming and offending your customers' neighbors in a rift over drift, haphazard spray patterns will invite horticultural problems down the road that may remain hard to detect.

"Drift injury is not always described as death to the plants," Pound explains. A once-viable shrub or flower that presents puzzling aspects of illness can in reality be a

victim of a previous encounter with just a slight amount of drift.

"This is injury without actually hitting the plants," says Pound. The problem is aggravated when turf managers treat during hot weather or high winds. Always check droplet size. If a drift dilemma develops, stop treatment that day.

"If we get into any media hype for 1994, it will be related to exposure," he says. A prime target could be phenoxies, especially 2,4-D. "Phenoxies are phenoxies to people who don't know better. The president will come after something to appease the environmentalists—and everyone's heard of 2,4-D."

Pound remembers the Alar alarm. "They were tough on apples, and they can be tough on us," Pound warns. The core of the concerns was later

declared to be disproportionate to the actual danger, but the damage was done.



Pound: 2,4-D a potential community relations problem.

"It's a sitting duck," Pound says of 2,4-D. "At this point the research is inconclusive and the homeowner doesn't know what to think," he notes.

While research points out that 2,4-D is not an especially persistent material in turf, the issue of long-term exposure lingers. "That's what they're trying to decipher right now," Pound reports.

Another potential perception problem can be brought about by the use of glyphosate when spot treating for weeds. Television commercials have been targeted at homeowners, and they are encouraged to get out on the lawn and start squirting away.

"It will control that broadleaf weed, but you will have a brown spot," he cautions. "We don't need Roundup to spot treat for broadleaf weeds—we have the phenoxies for that," Pound points out.

And for all the public concerns over pesticides, Pound ponders, there's still an ongoing consumer reluctance to opt exclusively for organics. "Usually they're priced a lot more expensively," he observes. "The organic fertilizers are still on peoples' minds," he notes, but "they try the organic program and they get broadleaf weeds."

—James E. Guyette was managing editor of Lawn Care Industry magazine. He is now a freelance writer based in South Euclid, Ohio.