

## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

is a proud member of these green industry professional organizations:



**Associated Landscape Contractors of America**, 12200 Sunrise Valley Dr., Suite 150, Reston, VA; (703) 620-6363.

**American Association of Nurserymen (National Landscape Association)**, 1250 I St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 789-2900.

**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.



**Professional Grounds Management Society**, 120 Cockeysville Rd., Suite 104, Hunt Valley, MD 21031; (410) 584-9754.



**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, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 872-3860.



**Sports Turf Managers Association**, 401 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611-4267; (312) 644-6610.

**Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association**, 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd., Suite 500, Bloomington, MN 55437; (612) 832-5000.

## AS WE SEE IT

JERRY ROCKE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



### Results of mortality study are what you make of them

Sometimes, we, as editors, wish our magazines would appear each month out of thin air, like they do in your mailboxes. But for us, they don't. Producing them is a painstaking process.

We sometimes wish we weren't forced to make difficult decisions like we had to make on page 72. The headline there, you'll note, reads: "Long-awaited mortality study released at golf show." It had originally read "Golf superintendents' death rate of cancer is higher than normal."

When we have a somewhat controversial story, we'll discuss it among ourselves, much like the editors of your local newspaper do with their stories of the day. In this case, one of us voiced some concern about the original headline being "too alarmist."

We do *not* want to be alarmist. We *do* want to report the facts as they were reported to the membership of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America by Dr. Burton Kross.

His Iowa State University study compiled the reasons for the deaths of 618 former members of the GCSAA. It found that the incidence of certain cancers was abnormally high, compared to the general population.

Certainly, the research has holes in it, including the fact that statistics on personal habits—such as smoking, alcohol use and diet—and family medical histories were not studied. Neither is the study complete yet.

And certainly, cancer is a subject that is hard to pin down—not because we know that *everything* causes cancer, but because it's hard to *prove* that *anything* causes cancer. Even the tobacco lobby maintains that a cause-and-effect relationship between smoking and cancer has yet to be proven.

The kneejerk reaction is to point a finger at pesticides as a possible cause for these cancers. But that, quite frankly, is a totally unfounded premise.

Let's admit this much: in the early days of non-ag pesticide application (among

superintendents and pest control operators), little was known about the compounds and less care was taken in handling them.

Many of the chemicals that were used in the past, like silvex, are now illegal. And many of the practices those old-timers used are now entirely outdated. I remember years ago, for instance, hearing one former applicator relate how he used to rub a certain herbicide all over his arms to keep mosquitos away.

Also gone are the somewhat lax tests performed on materials being handled by applicators in the '40s, '50s and '60s. We now have the EPA; we have testing equipment that can measure parts per trillion, and residue detection equipment like the blacklight system Dr. Kross himself showed superintendents in Dallas.

So where does that leave us? Here:

- The chemical manufacturers are working to supply us with new products that are much safer than earlier "generations" of products, and telling us how to safely apply them.

- The government is providing us with a system of checks and balances and actually legislating what materials we use, and how we safely apply them.

- The scientific community is investigating our history and providing us with some much-needed safety lessons.

How safe are the materials you are using? Before making that decision, you must evaluate all the information at your disposal, all the possible variables that could have entered into the Iowa State study.

But remember that any final decisions remain yours—and yours alone.