

**D**on Wahl speaks out of both sides of his mouth. But he can afford to—indeed, it's his duty to. You see, he's a reporter for WFAA-TV, the ABC affiliate in Fort Worth, Tex.

Wahl, however, is not just *any* reporter. He's the station's *environmental* reporter, and he gave a generally balanced report to members of the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association during a break in the Green Industry Expo two months ago. Which is to say, the news is good and the news is bad for the green industry.

**The good news:** "I'm encouraged by the efforts of [green] industry leaders," Wahl said. "Chemicals and fertilizers are keys to the way we live, in many ways."

**The bad news:** "It's a fact that pesticides and fertilizers are showing up in wastewater. And it would be a mistake to assume that all the information is misguided, uninformed and detrimental to your industry."

But the ongoing controversy over pesticides in

our environment has really evolved past whether they are good or bad.

Most educated people will admit to the fact that pesticides, used in moderate amounts, are good. They kill unwanted agricultural and household pests, and—in the process—they give us higher agricultural yields, safer homes, and prettier yards and parks.

However, most educated people will also admit that over-use of pesticides can result in groundwater contamination; ozone layer depletion; beneficial insect deaths; and irritating skin rashes, flu-like symptoms and other acute chemical responses in humans.

"But people's ideas are changing," Wahl continued. "People are developing different perceptions about their yards [see page xx]. There is a

trend nationally against environmental reporting."

Once upon a time, environmental reporters were all the rage at local television stations. Flick the remote once and you got Jason Pompadour reporting from the local chemical waste disposal site. Flick it again and you saw Jane Bouffant interviewing some suburban housewife who wouldn't stop bawling because the smell of fertilizers emanating from the neighbor's yard were making her throw up.

Nowadays, though, when you turn on the television, you're more likely to see "Par for the Course," a beautifully-produced ESPN program sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America that "establishes superintendents as leaders in the environmental movement," according to Scott Smith.

Smith, the GCSAA's director of media relations and video services, also spoke to TOCA members. He told us that his association is spending \$1 million this year on public relations, and—with the addition of government relations lawyers—"is now in the lobbying business."

This, of course, is fine. But I repeat, for effect: the debate over chemicals in the environment has evolved beyond the notion of good versus evil. While keeping one eye on the short term and pesticides' impact on your lawn care company or golf course, you must also keep one eye on the long term and their impact on the environment.

"The important thing to remember is that you are an advocate for using products," stated Wahl. "While you are trying to provide more information, you might find that a cooperative spirit is very useful. [So] don't look at government regulations as the enemy. In the environmental arena, it's what happens down the road, long term, that's important."

I couldn't have said it any better myself.

## The chemical controversy evolves past good vs. bad



*Jerry Roche*

JERRY ROCHE  
Editor-in-Chief