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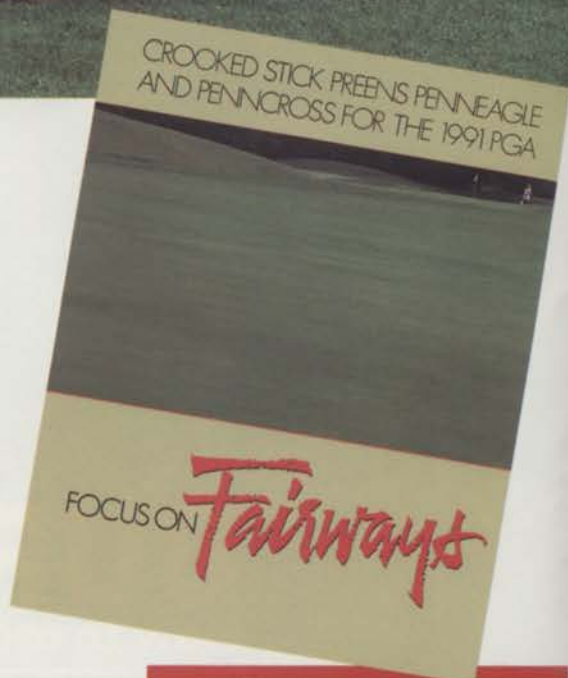


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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT



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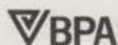
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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly by Edgell Communications, Inc. Corporate and Editorial offices: 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44130. Advertising offices: 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44130, 233 North Michigan Avenue, 24th Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60601 and 3475 Lenox Road, N. E., Suite 665, Atlanta, Georgia 30326. Accounting, Advertising Production and Circulation offices: 1 East First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802. Subscription rates: \$30 per year in the United States; \$55 per year in Canada, all other countries: \$100 per year. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$3.00 in the U.S.; \$6.00 in Canada; elsewhere \$10; add \$3.50 per order for shipping and handling. Back issues, if available, \$10; add \$3.50 per order for shipping and handling (pre-paid orders only). Office of publication: Edgell Communications, Inc., 1 East First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802. Second class postage paid at Duluth, Minnesota 55806 and additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1991 by Edgell Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Canadian G.S.T. number: R-124213133.

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Reflections in the desert

The desert sun reflected off the shiny sea of Mercedes, Jaguars, and BMWs with a vengeance, assaulting my tender eyes. "So this is Palm Springs," I thought, squinting, walking through The Springs Club's parking lot. (We weren't really in Palm Springs but Rancho Mirage, Calif., and that's close enough.)

My tour guide was Mel Robey, turfgrass instructor at the College of the Desert in nearby Palm Desert. In 1987, he'd offered to show me around "a few of the 75 golf courses in this area." It was nearly four years later, and there were now more than 80 courses, but I finally took him up on it.

Robey, former superintendent for Purdue University's 36 golf holes, had the perfect preface to our tour of the area: "People expect better maintained golf courses around here because of the money they pay and what they see on television."

What he didn't say is that many of the tournaments Palm Springians see on television are taking place in their own backyards—literally.

Robey maintains a close working relationship with many of the Coachella Valley's golf course superintendents, including Ross O'Fee, a transplanted New Zealander who's now at The Springs Club. O'Fee is also president of the Hi-Lo Desert GCSA and a born talker who began our conversation by agreeing with Robey.

"If members see changes happening on their course, they don't get bored," he said. "But one of the problems with being a superintendent around here is that you're constantly being compared to the other courses."

For that reason, superintendents in the Coachella Valley form a close fraternity, O'Fee notes. Similar demands are placed on them by their high-rolling members. This situation has led to lots of equipment-swapping among supers and other cooperative efforts.

O'Fee mows his bentgrass greens at $\frac{3}{64}$ th of an inch. That's right: bentgrass greens, here in the heart of the desert.

"The trend around here is away from bermudagrass greens," O'Fee notes. "Bentgrass is faster than bermuda, and that's what our golfers want."

While most other Californians are experiencing water bans resulting from a five-year drought, those nestled at the foot of the San Jacinto Mountains have their own little aquifer that will supposedly supply the area with water for hundreds of years to come. Hence the trend toward the higher water-use bentgrass.

Bentgrass vs. bermudagrass is a controversy we'll explore more fully in our August issue. But for now, wave with us—if you will—at Ross O'Fee and Mel Robey disappearing in the rear-view mirror as we high-tail it out of the lush Coachella Valley, through the desert, back toward La-la-land and the long flight home.

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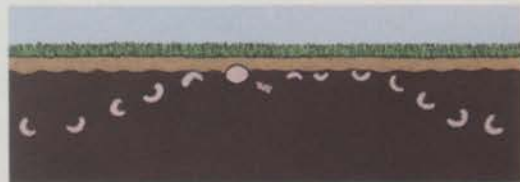


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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

LEGISLATION

Green industry petitions for practical regulations

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Green industry representatives campaigned here on May 9 for lawn care product legislation that simply makes sense, during Senate hearings on pesticide use. And despite an emotional offensive from alleged victims of pesticide poisoning, industry spokespersons believe their voices were heard.

"I felt good about the approach the senators took," said Ann McClure, executive director of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). "They were on a fact-finding mission. They are willing to take a look at the issue. There's no doubt that public citizens want to know if they're in danger. They deserve to know, but there's a broad spectrum of choices of ways to solve it."

It's not that PLCAA doesn't want notification standards, it just wants those standards to be practical.

McClure outlined for the subcommittee the notification and training programs it supports for both commercial and non-commercial users of lawn care products.

"PLCAA endorses the concept of reasonable and responsible national regulation of the lawn care services industry," said



PLCAA's McClure: "I can't overemphasize our concern when we hear stories about reactions to chemicals."

McClure, "and is pleased to share with this subcommittee an outline of the very positive program we support."

The PLCAA program includes standards for:

- Pre-notification, one day in advance, to customers who tell the applicator they wish to be notified; persons whose property abuts an applicator's customer's property who notify the applicator that they wish to be pre-notified; and persons whose names are registered as

"chemically sensitive."

- Posting a 4 x 5-inch sign at the primary point of access to the property immediately following an application. Residential properties of more than four families would be marked at all primary points of entry.

- Licensing and training for all commercial pesticide applicators, regardless of whether the pesticides applied are classified for general or restricted use.

"What we're disagreeing

on," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), "is the nature of the right-to-know."

"We do highly recommend to our members that they tell customers exactly what they are doing," replied McClure, when asked by Lieberman why the burden of seeking information is placed on the customer. "The question we're addressing now is, who else needs to know?"

"We think that other people who may suffer a reaction to the chemicals certainly ought to know also. It's got to be done in some practical way."

The Notification of Chemical Application Act of 1991 (S.B. 849), introduced by Lieberman and Harry Reid (D-Nev.) would require commercial applicators of lawn care and other non-agricultural chemicals to provide detailed written contracts to all customers. Others who may come in contact with lawn care products would also have to be notified. Notification would include persons within 1000 feet of the property, a draconian provision that would play havoc with company time and scheduling.

"When you get into broad contexts of the bill," said Warren Stickle, presi-