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AS WE SEE IT

RON HALL, SENIOR EDITOR



Next stop: Capitol Hill

Monday a.m., Feb. 24.

The bus creeps out of New Haven while the town sleeps; even the southbound traffic on I-95 is sparse and drowsy.

It's 5:15 a.m. and Washington D.C. is a far piece down the road. So, who can be chipper so early? Not even Paul McDonough. And he brought the coffee.

The driver's a pro; you can see that. As much emotion as he shows, this could be a drive in the park for him, except he's a bit concerned about New York City. He wants to enter and escape that city's orbit before the commuters get a chance to tie themselves into knots.

Bridgeport. Norwalk. Stamford. The bus gobbles up Connecticut in a hurry. It's a small state—even for a small state.

The morning finally gains a foothold on a wintry sky that looks like somebody tried to smudge it out with a dirty eraser. New York's skyscrapers grow, then shrink, then dissolve into rain and lowering clouds. Uhm, that's easy.

Hello New Jersey; good-bye New Jersey.

Philadelphia, you're looking kinda grey, kinda solemn this morning.

The riders' spirits, buoyed by box lunches packed aboard by Lesco, rise.

The 26 Connecticut lawn care company owners and managers are at the door to the Hotel Washington before noon. They're almost cheery. Sandoz supplied the bus. DowElanco is preparing a tasty spread for them and other lawn care professionals arriving to participate in PLCAA's "Day on the Hill '92."

In all, 130 lawn care business owners and managers show up, most from mid-Atlantic and mid-east states. The Connecticut contingent, the one that comes by bus, is the largest from any one state.

Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. February 25.

Sen. Joe Lieberman doesn't arrive right away. When he does walk into his own office, his eyes widen. His lips seem to form the words—"Oh, my God!" But he

doesn't say it.

His surprise is evident. At least to some of the 26 lawn care professionals zippered into his office on this raw, drizzly Tuesday morning, yes, he seems surprised. Maybe even a little amused.

Lieberman (D-Conn.) regains his composure and smiles broadly. He comments about how unusual it is for his constituency to arrive in mass (or something very much like that).

But, for whatever reason, he's in fine mettle, downright genial.

Is this the same Sen. Joe Lieberman that took the chemical lawn application industry to task on Capitol Hill last May? (And may or may not do so again this spring.) *You bet.*

The same Sen. Lieberman who proposed legislation to—what many in the lawn care industry insist—hamstring chemical lawn applications? *You bet.*

But, his demeanor on this Tuesday morning is saying—*these are constituents and business people, people I represent.*

Several of the lawn care professionals outline their concerns. Conversation is abbreviated. Pointed. Polite.

Lieberman is attentive, inquisitive, but he makes no promises.

Tuesday evening.

Conversation from the tired riders is muted, but upbeat. They went to the capital to convince lawmakers of the importance of their work. In the process, they receive an education of their own.

It's been a long couple of days; miles of walking, a pow-wow with an aide to Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.), and meetings with several U.S. Representatives and their staff members too.

The headlights of the northbound bus slice through the drizzle of the moonless, starless night.

New Haven, next exit.

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cidicides. So Southern turf stays strong and healthy.

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People use a herbicide. Mild usually

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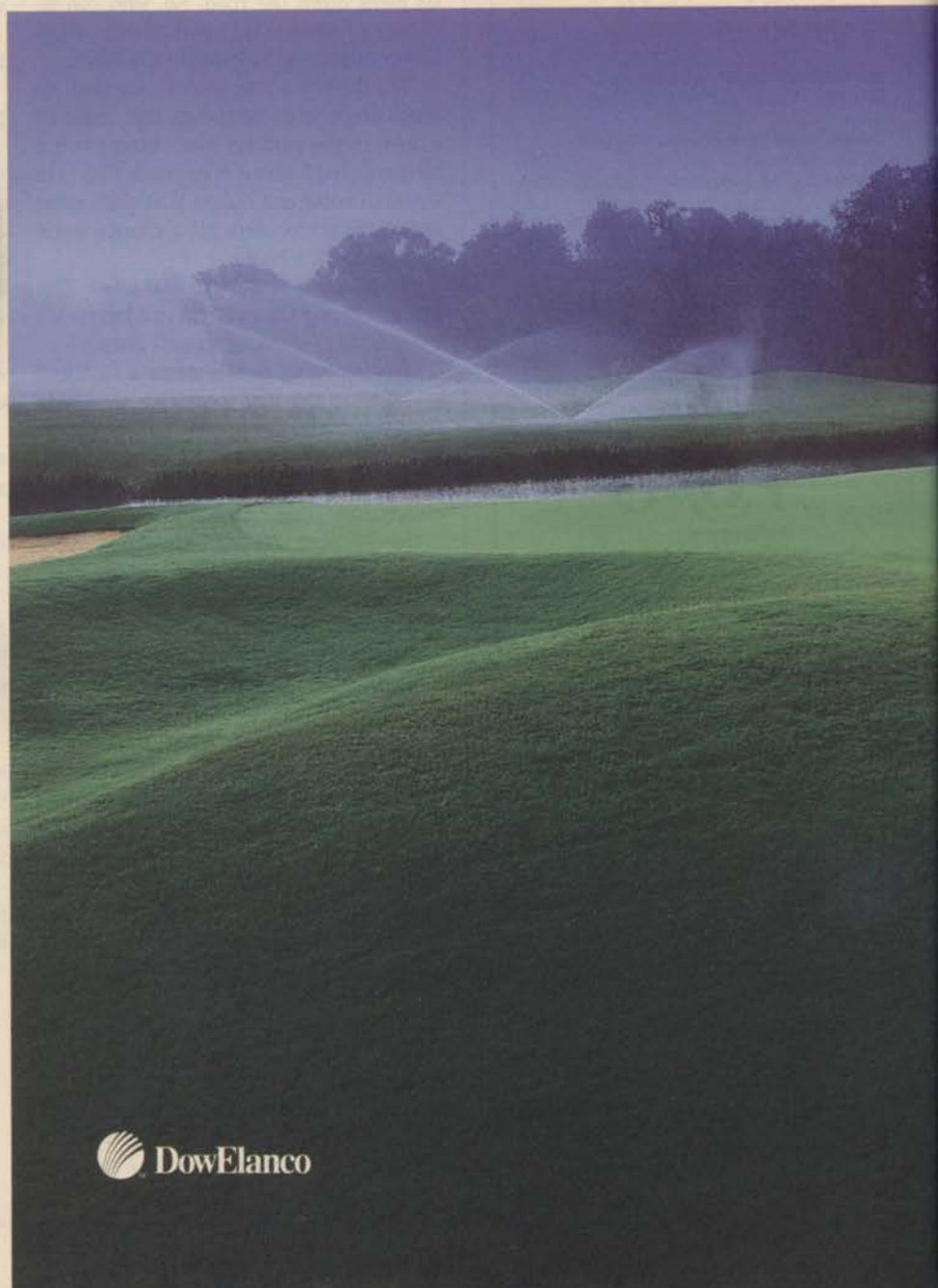
How To Keep Weeds From Sneaking Up On You.

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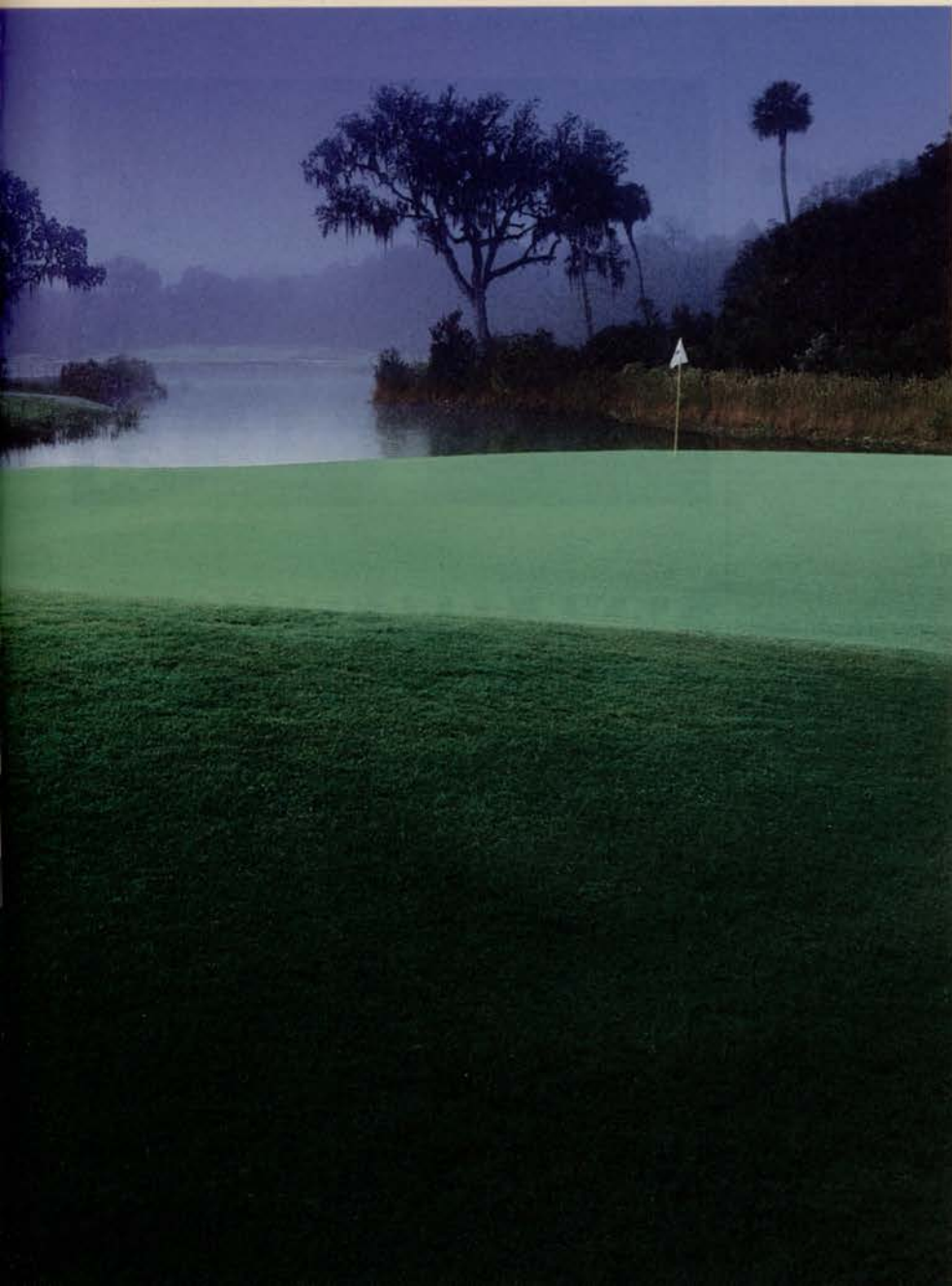
or flowers. Surflan is available as a sprayable and on fertilizer. If you prefer a granular form, there's XL* herbicide (it contains the same active ingredient



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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

INCORPORATING LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

APRIL 1992 VOL. 31, NO. 4

COVER FEATURE

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Ron Hall



ADVANSTAR Communications, Inc.,
7500 Old Oak Blvd. Cleveland, OH 44130
(216) 243-8100 or (216) 891-2718
Fax: (216) 891-2675

EDITORIAL STAFF

JERRY ROCHE, Editor-in-Chief
TERRY MCIVER, Managing Editor
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CYNTHIA GLADFELTER, Sales Manager
DIANE BIAS, Administrative Coordinator
7500 Old Oak Blvd. Cleveland, OH 44130
(216) 826-2855 (216) 826-2873
FAX (216) 891-2675
DICK GORE, East Coast Sales Manager
3475 Lenox Road NE Ste. 665
Atlanta, GA 30326
(404) 233-1817 FAX (404) 261-7422
ROBERT MIEROW, West Coast Representative
1515 NW 51st St., Seattle WA 98107
(206) 783-0549 FAX (206) 784-5545

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ON THE COVER: The Oregon Graduate Center, maintained by Teufel Commercial Landscape Co., Portland. Photo by Demoulin/Waddell, Inc.

ASK THE EXPERT

DR. BALAKRISHNA RAO



When to plant evergreens

Problem: When does the planting season for evergreens like pines and spruce begin? How late can we plant in the fall? (Michigan)

Solution: Generally, evergreen planting can be started as soon as the early summer growth has become hardened. Plant pines and spruce when the annual growth is complete and has hardened, and the terminal buds are firmly set. During dry periods, it is better to wait until there is some good rain and soil moisture, usually in early September.

Most of the plantings should be performed from late summer to early fall or from early September to late October. Planting would be risky after this time because of potential injury to plant parts from exposure to low temperature. Evergreens such as rhododendron and azaleas should not be planted after the above planting periods. These fall planted plants require sufficient care and proper follow-up to ensure good recovery from transplanting shock. Provide proper water and mulch.

As a general rule, plant about six to eight weeks before the soil temperature reaches 40° F in the fall. It would be risky to plant without having sufficient periods of warm soil temperature for proper root development and recovery.

With proper plant health care, you could plant until the end of October. Remember that different plants respond differently to planting. Most plants do better and are easier to transplant in the spring. Some others do better when planted in the fall. Late planted perennials should be covered with 2 to 3 inches of mulch after the ground freezes.

Minimizing herbicide residue

Problem: In a residential property, a large number of shrubs and plants like rhododendron and azaleas were showing injury from lawn-applied herbicides. Symptoms appear to be caused by 2,4-D and/or dicamba-like material. Is there anything we can do now to minimize the injury from possible residue in the soil. Secondly, what can be done to the foliage? (North Carolina)

Solution: Improperly-applied lawn herbicides containing 2,4-D and dicamba mixtures can affect non-target desirable plant materials in the landscape.

The extent of damage may vary depending upon the rate, formulations of herbicide (amine vs. ester) and species involved. To determine whether the soil has residual herbicide, a soil test would be beneficial. In addition, plant a known number of radish seeds in the suspected areas for a bioassay. If there is any soil residual of suspected herbicide, the seeds will either not germinate or the seedlings will show growth distortion.

If possible, plant seeds in an unaffected area for comparison. If herbicide is present, incorporating activated charcoal into the soil would be beneficial. This material may be difficult to incorporate into soil near established trees. In this case, injecting activated charcoal using a liquid fertilization technique may be useful.

Prune and discard already affected plant parts. The new growth may not show the symptoms if the soil does not contain high doses

of herbicide. Often the affected plant parts can be left alone if growth distortion is not objectionable. The herbicide will gradually break down in plant tissues and not cause permanent injury.

Medicaps and vascular systems

Problem: Can medicaps damage the vascular system of trees? (Missouri)

Solution: Medicaps implantation can cause some internal tissue injury. I have seen cross sections of treated trees showing extensive bluish-black discoloration of wood, suggesting the possibility of injury to xylem tissue. However, we seldom see adverse effects on the tree crown.

If the plant is suffering from iron deficiency, the risk of losing that tree from iron starvation is more likely than losing the tree because of injury from medicaps. It is true that whenever we drill holes to implant medicaps, we can see injury.

We need to compare the risk vs. the benefit to the tree. Ideally, trunk implantation is used to correct an existing nutrient deficiency followed by soil treatments to prevent a recurrence.

On pH adjusting methods

I appreciate readers' comments in response to my request in the November issue. Regarding pH-adjusting comments we ran in the February and November 1991 issues of LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT magazine, we received the following comments from Dr. Walter S. Barrows, a consultant from California: "Use 5 lb. soil sulfur per 100 sq.ft. or 2-1/2 cubic yards of soil to lower 0.5 pH point over time. Or use aluminum sulfate at 1 lb. per 100 sq.ft. Soil must be leachable."

As I indicated in previous months, I am not familiar with these recommendations to lower or buffer the pH. Those who are interested in this should try this on a small scale and learn more about it before using in many areas.

Dr. Balakrishna Rao is Manager of Technical Resources for the Davey Tree Co., Kent, Ohio.

Questions should be mailed to "Ask the Expert," LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.

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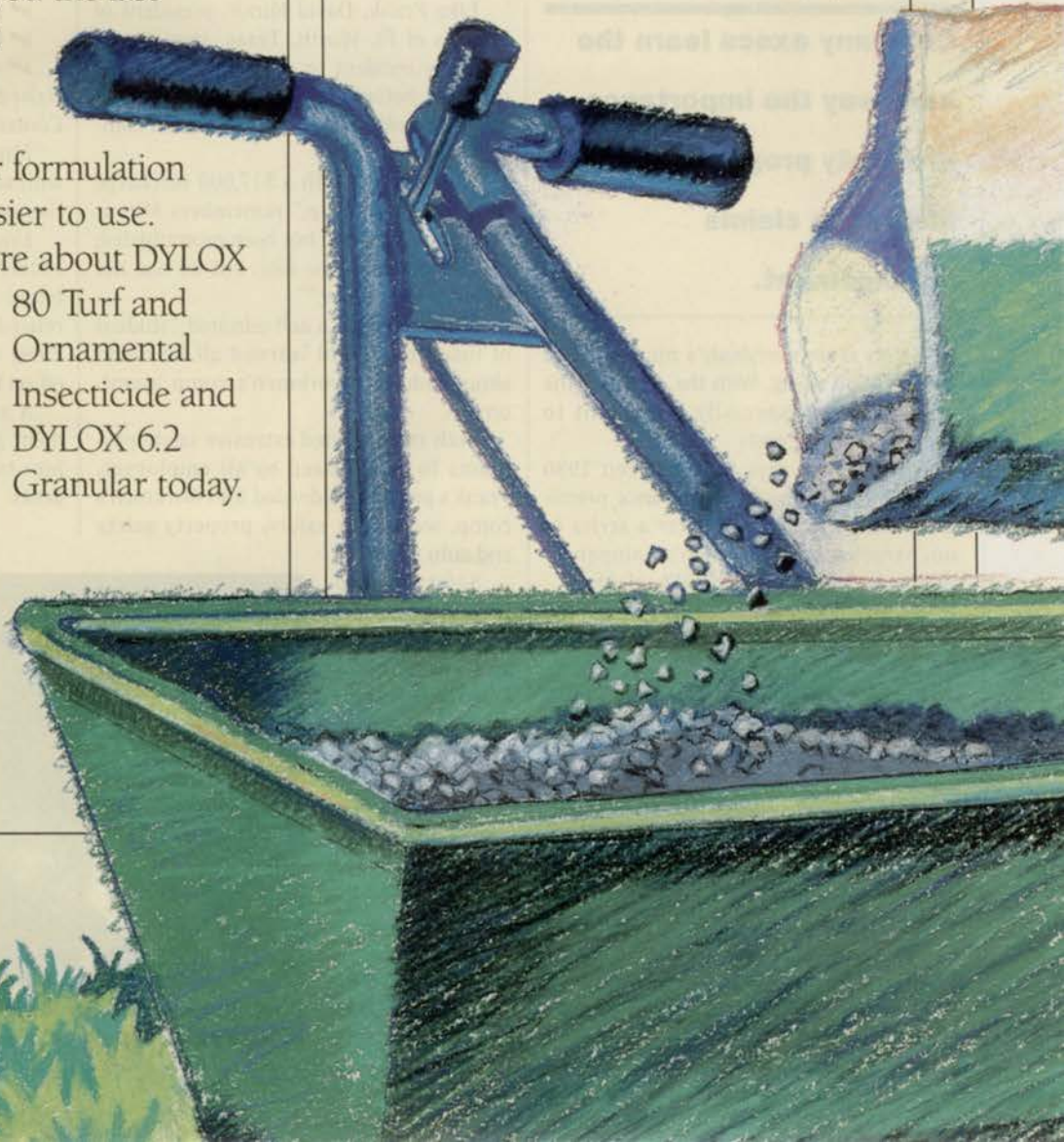
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MILES 

After premium hikes, owners become 'insurance literate' and more safety-conscious

Company execs learn the hard way the importance of safety programs and insurance claims management.

■ Safety is on everybody's mind as 1992 gets into full swing. With the economy the way it is, it's especially important to reduce insurance costs.

David Frank says that between 1986 and 1988 his company's insurance premiums doubled each year after a series of uncharacteristic workmen's compensation, auto, property and liability claims.

He says it was then that he realized the close relationship between insurance premiums and accident history.

Frank, president of David J. Frank Landscape Contracting, Germantown, Wisc., says the company's first concern was safety.

"We began an active safety and loss program," recalls Frank. Apparently, Frank's efforts are paying off, as the company recently had 120 days of no lost-time accidents, and good records in property as well.

He estimates the company saved \$100,000 in claims and premium charges in 1991.

Like Frank, David Minor, president of Minor's of Ft. Worth, Texas, says it only took one incident to convince him of the need for better claims management and accident reduction at his 150-person company.

"We were hit with a \$17,000 surcharge in workmen's comp," remembers Minor. "The comp rate had not been promulgated; we had gotten a base rate, but we had not received a 'modifier.'"

Minor became a self-admitted "student of insurance," and learned all he could about reducing workmen's comp premiums.

Both men enacted extensive safety programs to be followed by all employees. Frank's program is divided into workmen's comp, workplace safety, property safety and auto safety.

Safety is also influenced by proper selection and training of employees, and safety procedures are reviewed weekly.

Other plan elements at Minor's:

- ✓ a "get-back-to-work-soon" program;
- ✓ self-insurance on closed-end or first-aid-type claims;

- ✓ safety contests;
- ✓ better claims management; and
- ✓ adoption of safety standards established by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA).

Minor's company became "obsessed with safety," and as a result saved "tons of money."

Under Minor's safety program, foremen receive a \$35 per month safety bonus based on accident-free periods. Safety-related meetings are held every two weeks. Every new employee has to read and sign-off on the safety program.

A safety manual for claims management geared for safety "officers" describes how to respond to a wide variety of accidents.

continued on page 77



Dave Minor, right, and David Frank: Don't let 'someone else' in the office handle your company's insurance reviews.