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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 And many of the practices those old-timers used are now entirely outdated.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.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

'WE KNOW YOUR TURF'

MARCH 1994 VOL. 33, NO. 3

COVER FEATURE

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Friend or foe? Ally or enemy? They may help you or hurt you. Who are they? The media. You, however, can make an impact and possibly even direct the final outcome of a media encounter.

John Calsin

Effective media relations involves consistently providing accurate information on your agency or programs, presented in a straightforward, professional and timely manner.

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Bess Ritter May



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30 Recording transactions

If you're in business, you should have at least a simple accounting system set up. But as your business grows, so should your accounting methods. This simple system can be accomplished in a few minutes each day.

Dan Sautner

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Jerry Roche

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Ron Hall

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The EPA's Victor Kimm told lawn care operators that the Clinton administration wants a reduction in pesticide use. The LCOs didn't expect to find government officials asking them to use more chemical pesticides, so they weren't disappointed.

Ron Hall

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Surflan is so mild it can be applied over the top of delicate ornamentals.

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ASK THE EXPERT

DR. BALAKRISHNA RAO



Killing annual bluegrass

Problem: Is there a post-emergence herbicide to selectively remove annual bluegrass from desirable turfgrass in lawns? (North Carolina)

Solution: Annual bluegrass presents a serious weed problem in established turfgrass because of its prolific growth and seedhead production, shallow rooting, and poor drought tolerance.

Not many post-emergence herbicides are labelled for selectively removing annual bluegrass from desirable turf. Prograss from Nor-Am Chemical Co., however, is so labelled. According to the label, Prograss has both pre-emergence and early (two-leaf stage) post-emergence activity.

Prograss, an emulsifiable concentrate, is labelled to be used by professional applicators on ornamental turf only, and on home lawns by licensed or certified applicators only.

It is labelled for use on established perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, creeping bentgrass, turf-type tall fescue, St. Augustinegrass and dormant bermudagrass. It is intended for professional use only on ornamental areas such as golf courses, parks, commercial landscapes and home lawns.

According to the label, Prograss application is most effective on healthy, actively-growing turfgrass. Some application tips:

- Avoid overlapping when treating turfgrass to prevent possible injury.
- A soil fertility test is recommended prior to treatment.
- Do not apply to zoysiagrass, hard fescue or fine fescue because it may cause severe injury.
- Be careful while using Prograss on overseeded and/or newly-seeded lawns.
- Read and follow label specifications for additional details and recommendations.

On aquatic weed control

Problem: We have to manage small ponds in our clients' properties. We have a problem with managing floating weeds such as algae and duckweeds. How can we get rid of them? (Ohio)

Solution: The most common floating weed in Ohio is filamentous algae, also known as "moss" or "pond scum." It grows on the bottom of submerged vegetation and hair-like fibrous filaments float to the surface. The weed can cover a large area of the pond.

Most algae growth can be managed by using low concentrations of copper sulfate. General rate recommendation is 2.7 lbs. per acre-foot of water. If the pond water is very hard, higher rates would be beneficial.

For best results, dissolve the copper sulfate in water and treat the surface of the algal mat. Reports indicate that finely ground "Sno grade" or "instant" copper sulfate dissolves easily.

Remember that copper sulfate is corrosive to galvanized containers. The solution should be mixed in stainless steel, plastic or copper-lined containers.

Also, if the pond has too much algal growth (more than half of the total pond surface) and is treated, this may deplete oxygen and kill fish. The problem would be greater during hot and over-

cast weather. In this situation, it is better to treat half the pond area, wait for 10 to 14 days, and then treat the other half.

At the recommended rate, the copper sulfate is very diluted. If inactivated after 12 hours, it should not have any adverse effects on livestock. Do not apply copper sulfate when fish are spawning because it will kill the newly-hatched young fish.

To manage the duckweeds (*Lemna* sp.), apply herbicides such as Reward or Sonar. Measure the area to be treated and mix and apply these according to label directions.

Some aquatic herbicides also help manage certain algal species. It helps to first identify the weed species you have in the pond and then apply the right product.

Read and follow label specifications for better results.

No-herbicide weed control

Problem: We used to manage weed problems along highways using Roundup. Last year, we were told not to use any herbicides in these contracts. Any advice about managing weeds without using herbicides? (Victoria, Canada)

Solution: You might consider using Sharp Shooter, says Richard Rathgens, Davey's senior agronomist. Sharp Shooter is a potassium salt of saturated fatty acids from Mycogen Corp. It is a contact, non-selective herbicide. (I am not sure if this product is registered in Canada. Check with your Ministry of Environment.)

It is very difficult to selectively manage weeds without using the proper herbicides. An alternative approach would be to remove the weeds through cultivation and/or physically digging prior to flowering.

Another option is to encourage stands of desirable vegetation such as turfgrass or groundcovers to compete for the same space. Many broadleaf weeds have difficulty competing with properly-mowed turfgrasses.

Frequent site inspection and proper sanitation practices should help manage the problem along highways.

Another option is to eliminate the existing weeds, then overseed the thinned-out areas with desirable plant materials such as turfgrass, groundcovers or wildflowers. Provide good cultural practices to ensure their establishment and maintain density.

Another approach is to use natural mulch, black plastic sheets or fabric mulch around desirable plants. Even with this method, airborne weed seeds can contaminate the area, in which case mechanical hand-weeding may ultimately be needed.

Although desirable, there are no bio-herbicides on the market that can help manage weed problems. However, a number of scientists are working with a few candidate micro-organisms to manage such weeds in the future.

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

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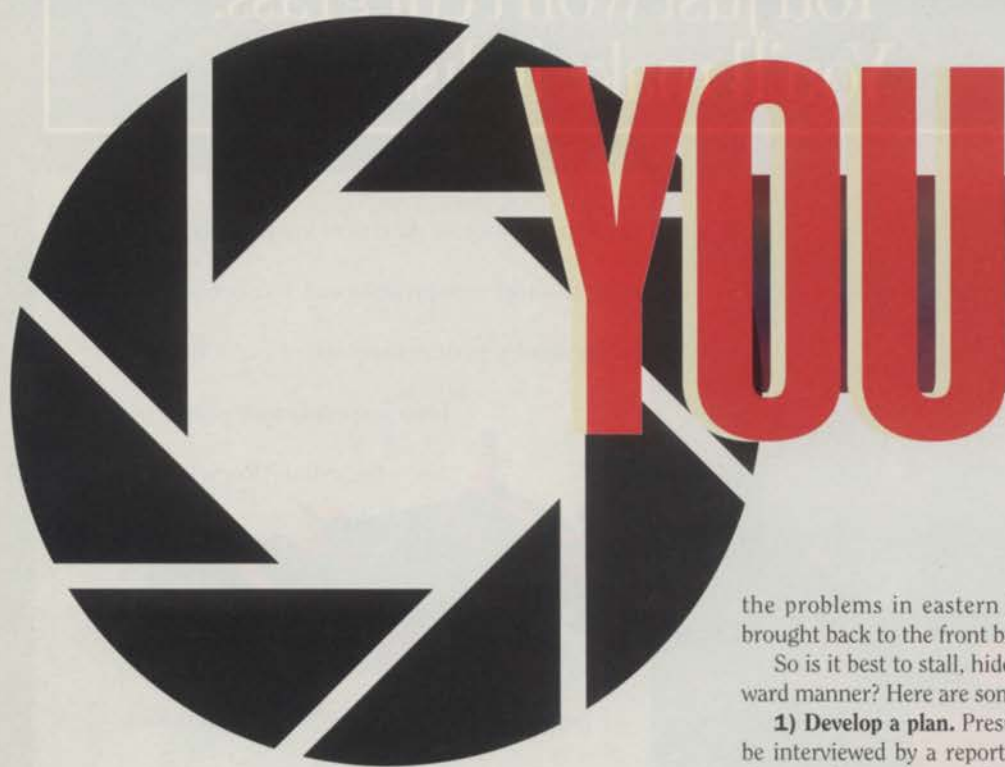
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Circle No. 150 on Reader Inquiry Card





Professional journalists are not out to 'get' you

■ Friend or foe? Ally or enemy? They may help you or hurt you. Who is it? The media. You, however, have the ability to make an impact and possibly even direct the final outcome of a media encounter.

First, who is the media? A few years ago, they were as easy to spot as plantain in Kentucky bluegrass. If it were a broadcast (television) journalist, usually two people showed up, one lugging a big, heavy camera on his shoulder and the other a well-dressed man or woman carrying a microphone. Or a print journalist might be carrying a 35mm camera, a tape recorder and a notepad. They might even have had a press card if they were with the local newspaper or a staff writer for a national magazine. No more.

Over the past 10 to 15 years with the growth of computers and hand-held video cameras and the popularity of journalism as a profession, the media can now be almost anyone—including a student on the local school or university newspaper.

What's the big deal about that? Student journalists—or any journalist for that matter—can be persistent in their search for a "big" story. They want that byline even though it might mean sneaking up on you to find the next Super Fund site on your property.

But most professional journalists are not out to get you. This insight may be helpful to you the next time you are called for an interview or a camera crew or writer shows up at your office or job site.

While environmental concerns may not seem to be first on reporters' lists at the moment, what with health care reform and

the problems in eastern Europe, they are not far from being brought back to the front burner.

So is it best to stall, hide or deal with the media in a straightforward manner? Here are some suggestions:

1) Develop a plan. Presume that at some point you are going to be interviewed by a reporter. A television reporter, of course, has the capacity to do you the most immediate harm or show you in the best light. Chances are very good that only 30 seconds of what you say—a "sound bite"—is going to be used.

Assistants and other employees should be included in the plan. Rather than letting one of them be interviewed—unless you have an articulate and knowledgeable staff member and have already worked with the person on possible interview scenarios—it would be better to stress that they direct the media to you.

Remember, journalists are trained to ask probing questions and do not like taking no for an answer. But many of them are impartial and will work with you if at all possible.

What happens in an "ambush" situation? Be courteous, but tell the reporter that you are busy and ask them to come back at an agreed-upon time. If possible, find out what direction the interview will take; if not, be wary of granting the interview. You might also ask for time to collect your thoughts rather than getting antagonistic with someone who may be looking for a negative response.

2) Keep a file of the positive things you are doing. Then all you have to do is use the information as a guide. This does not have to be elaborate: just hand-written notes on scraps of paper, reminders of successful projects or new things the company has done.

3) Admit you don't know the answer. What if you are asked a question you don't have an answer to? Say so. If you can suggest someone else for the reporter to talk to (for example, an 800 customer service telephone number), be helpful.

Many times, an initial request from the media is for background. The journalist might just need help getting information, and chances are that you won't be quoted.

4) Go off-the-record. During an interview, if there is something you want to tell the reporter, but do not want included in any articles, ask the reporter to turn off the video camera or tape recorder. Usually, your request is respected.

5) Be yourself. An interview with the media can be positive. Be helpful if you can. The time you take with the journalist may turn into some great free advertising.

—The author, John Calsin, is a freelance writer with headquarters in West Chester, Pa.

and the media

DOS AND DON'TS

DO:

- ...be pleasant
- ...say you're busy, if you are
- ...control the circumstances
- ...ask for questions in advance
- ...say you don't know, if you don't
- ...keep a folder of positive things

DON'T:

- ...be antagonistic
- ...abruptly leave
- ...be afraid to talk
- ...make threats
- ...be argumentative

—J.C.

Good public relations like 'fire prevention'

by Greg Petry
and Renae Waier

■ Effective media relations involves consistent communication with the media that provides accurate information on your agency or programs, presented in a straightforward, professional and timely manner. Public relations is different than general journalism. You're practicing "fire prevention" rather than "fire fighting." Your concerns and the issues on which you focus should contribute to the overall goals and objectives of the organization. You should try to be proactive, generating information on the organization's health, rather than only reactive, responding to unfavorable reports—in effect applying a bandage to the wounds.

Your job, as a media contact for your organization, is to get information reported factually. You may be the initial contact who directs media personnel to the proper, pre-designated spokesperson for a specific story, or you may be that source. The spokesperson must be well versed on all aspects of the issue, the event, the organization—or have access to that information. Remember, reporters prefer to speak to the people in charge.

You and the news media form a team. You need them as a con-

duit to deliver information to those you wish to receive it. They need you as a source of supply for the information they wish (or need) to deliver. Properly handled, it's a win/win situation.

In general, media personnel do their best to get across the most factual information they have. It's a difficult job, and those who pursue it honestly and faithfully deserve our respect. If you provide these individuals with factual information they will report it the way they hear it.

News media outlets are business entities; they must make money to survive. They must supply what people want to read or what people want to see and hear in order to generate the income to stay in business. Within that framework, they provide the service of delivering information to their audiences.

Know what is news, what is "unpaid" advertising and what is "fluff." News merits attention. "Unpaid" advertising and fluff generally will receive the lowest priority. News items will have two or more of the following attributes: be of interest, be important, be timely, have the potential of making an impact on the audience.

News reports need to deliver essential information: who, what, when, where, why and how. Address these issues quickly, in the first two paragraphs of printed stories or in the first minutes of delivery of verbal information.

There are a few basics to grab the attention of most people: themselves, their safety, their money, their children, their fun, their daily routine, their beliefs, and other people.

For the media, determining what makes news is a balancing act that takes into account the interests of the audience and the interests of the business. The stories delivered in print or on the air are those which address the concerns of the largest portion of the audience it is hoped will consume it. If the "product" addresses audience concerns, they won't change the channel or put down the paper.

Get to know your media contacts: the reporters assigned to cover your "beat," or general area of news; the editors who work with those stories; and the on-air news anchors who present broadcast news to the audience. Meet these people. Let them know who you are and what you do for your organization. Leave your business card for their files. Then stay in frequent contact to keep the lines of communication open.

It's up to you to find out how these individuals think, what their attitude is about your general area of expertise (such as parks, recreation, athletic facilities, or turf and lawn care services). The media outlet may have an "official" position, which may or may not agree with the attitude of those you will directly deal with. Theoretically, this attitude should not matter; news should be delivered in a straightforward, factual manner. But people are human; organizational and personal attitudes do "slip into" news reporting. If you know the attitudes of the media outlet and what type of information they feel impacts the

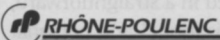
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Toss New Chip In Water And Of Your To Problems Beg

By Greg Pein
and Gene West

Effective media relations involves consistent communication with the media that provides accurate information on your agency or program presented in a straightforward, professional and timely manner. Public relations is different than general journalism. You're practicing "fire prevention" rather than "fire fighting." Your concerns and the issues on which you focus should contribute to the overall goals and objectives of the organization. You should try to be proactive, generating information on the organization's health, rather than only reactive, responding to unfavorable reports—in effect, applying a bandage to the wounds.

Your job as a media contact for your organization is to get information reported accurately. You may be the initial contact who directs media personnel to the proper, pre-designated spokesperson for a specific story, or you may be that source. The spokesperson should not matter; news should be delivered in a straightforward, professional manner. It's up to you to find out how these individuals think, what their attitude is about your general area of expertise (such as public relations, athletic facilities, or food and lawn care services). The media outlet may have an "official" position, which may or may not agree with the attitude of those you will directly deal with. Theoretically, this attitude should not matter; news should be delivered in a straightforward, professional manner. It's up to you to find out how these individuals think, what their attitude is about your general area of expertise (such as public relations, athletic facilities, or food and lawn care services). The media outlet may have an "official" position, which may or may not agree with the attitude of those you will directly deal with. Theoretically, this attitude should not matter; news should be delivered in a straightforward, professional manner.



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