

industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Petition to put pesticide restrictions on ballot

SPRINGFIELD, MA —

Lawn care, tree care and pest control companies in Massachusetts are closely monitoring the progress of an initiative petition aimed at restricting the use of chemical pesticides in and around schools and day-care centers.

The petition, entitled "An Act to Protect Children From Exposure to Pesticides," is being circulated by a consumer-action group known as MassPirg. Professional applicators, including the Massachusetts Lawn Care Association, say that the petition is faulty.

Proponents must gather 57,100 signatures by Dec. 1 before sending the petition to the state legislature in January. The legislature has three choices: 1) approve the peti-

tion, 2) disapprove the petition or 3) take no action.

Although a similar bill has been languishing in a legislative committee the past several years, it's unlikely the lawmakers will disapprove the petition. A legislator probably

wouldn't want to be perceived as being against anything that would promote child safety, green industry sources tell *LM*.

More likely the legislature would take no action, and applicators in Massachusetts are bracing for the measure to be on the November 2000 ballot.

Among other things, the

Act requires written notification of schools employees, pupils and their parents at least two days prior to a pesticide application, requires posting in a common area of the facility and along the perimeter of the property at least two working days prior to an outdoor application and for at least 72 hours following the application, requires that

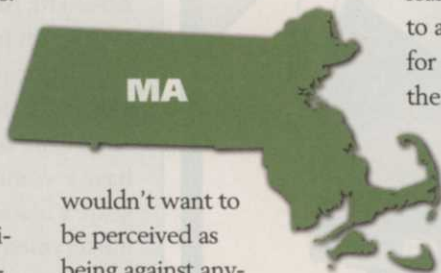
each school or day care center in the state adopt and implement an integrated pest management (IPM) plan, forbids the use of any pesticides classified as known, likely or probably human carcinogens for outdoor applications and forbids the application of pesticides outdoors for aesthetic purposes.

Any person, including school personnel, who violates any of these provisions could be fined up to \$5,000 per day.

Edwin McGuire, owner/operator of The Lawn Co., South Dennis, MA, tells *LM* that he expects the measure to eventually end up on next fall's ballot.

"The question is: How do we work to defeat this?" he adds. "The concern is that a year from now we're going to be in a big battle or, worse yet, no battle at all."

— RON HALL



OPEI's Dix retires, Harley joins

Alexandria, VA — After 27 years leading the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, President and CEO Dennis Dix has retired, effective March 31, 2000. Dix's key programs during his long tenure were the establishment of the International Outdoor Power Equipment Expo, held annually in Louisville, KY; legislative work on issues such as liability, emissions and noise; expanded member services; and purchasing OPEI's headquarters building in Alexandria.

He will be succeeded by William Harley, who will join OPEI in early January, 2000. Harley's background includes 18 years as CEO of the National

Utility Contractors Association.

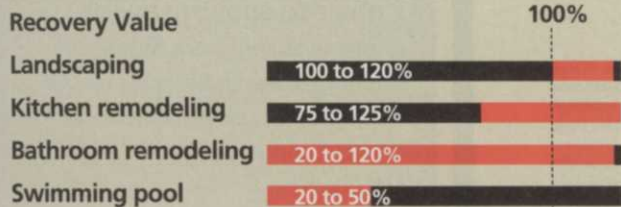


William Harley

Did You Know?

Recovering landscape dollars

Landscape work appears to be a more dependable investment than a new kitchen, according to *Money* magazine. A survey of recovery value at selling time for homeowners shows landscaping recovers at least 100% of its value, and sometimes more. Here are the other results:



Info Center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY

A **LAWN RENOVATION KIT**...is now available from Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products to help professional landscapers start, promote and increase profits from lawn renovation services. The kit includes materials that exhibit how the profes-



sional landscaper can increase profits by offering lawn renovation services. For more information, call 888/922-TURF.

AGGRENE HAS A NEW WEB SITE...with information on products, sales, results of field tests and answers to frequently asked questions. The site, which will soon have e-commerce capabilities, is geared toward landscapers and nurserymen searching for trade information. Access the site at www.aggrene.com.

THE HANDBOOK OF PEST MANAGEMENT,...edited by John Ruberson, provides information on the management of crop pests, including invertebrates, pathogens and vertebrates. Available at www.dekker.com, the book also includes pest management principles and techniques, current practice and future technology.

HAND SELECTED HOLLAND BULBS...are available from Netherland Bulb. The new, full-color catalog features pricing, photos and descriptions. To receive a catalog, call 888/508-3763.

A GUIDE TO SNOWTHROWERS... is now available from Simplicity. The four-color guide outlines what to look for in snowthrowers and details Simplicity's full line of machines.



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LA schools losing the weed war

LOS ANGELES

School officials here experimented with a heat wand — a propane-fueled rod — to kill weeds on the grounds of a former middle school this past August.

That's how desperate some officials are to find a way to fight back the weeds since the district's new policy banning the use of pesticides and herbicides on school property.

Actually, the policy, adopted in March by the Los Angeles Board of Education, phases out the use of the chemical products over the

next three years. Some schools, however, have already abandoned their use.

So far, the only proven method to control weeds in this massive district is to pull them by hand, and the district is reportedly hiring 50 additional gardeners to help with the task.

"It's an endless job," Maurice Rossini, an assistant principal at Reseda High School, told the Los Angeles Times in late August. "You start at one end of the school and by the time you're finished, they're already growing back."

10 nastiest invasives

STATE COLLEGE, PA.

Invasive plants pose one of the most insidious environmental threats to the United States in the 21st Century, claims Larry Kuhns, Ph.D., Professor of Ornamental Horticulture at Penn State University.

"Compared to invasive plants and weeds, the chemical pollutants of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s will be considered an easy cleanup," he says.

Top 10 on Kuhns' "Least Wanted" list:

1. Tree of heaven. Huge amounts of wind-spread seeds.
2. Multiflora rose. Introduced as a wildlife cover.
3. Purple loosestrife. Invades wetlands, disturbed soils.
4. Japanese knotweed. Extensive root system.
5. Phragmites. Forms huge colonies.
6. Canada thistle. Serious problem for farm crops.
7. Poison hemlock. Not related to hemlock tree.
8. Japanese stiltgrass. Hindrance to forest regeneration.
9. Mile-a-minute vine. Can grow 6 in. in a day.
10. Autumn olive. Birds spread its seeds.

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TEAM ^c	H	M	M	M	M	M	NR	NR
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Or visit our website at www.turffacts.com.

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Preparing for the next drought

Wilmington, DE — The 1999 Eastern drought is over, but the green industry learned some valuable lessons, reports "The Mid Atlantic Grower." This past Aug. 5, Delaware Governor Tom Carper ordered mandatory water restrictions for much of the state. The green industry thought the restrictions unfairly targeted it. As a result, industry committees, spearheaded by the Delaware Association of Nurserymen, are developing a "drought emergency kit," with prepared letters voicing industry's concern over restrictions and names and addresses of public officials. Also, committees are working up fact sheets on water conservation and appropriate watering techniques for their clients.

Last one out, turn off the lights

As millions prepare to celebrate the new millennium in parties and special events, several leading chemical manufacturers are planning to stop their operations on New Year's Eve as a precaution against any computer-driven accidents, say some wire reports.



The stories cite managers from DuPont, Monsanto, Rhone-Poulenc and Ashland Chemical saying they plan to halt operations temporarily during the holiday weekend. While the manufacturers say their own operations are Y2K compliant, the remote possibility of other problems from utilities or other suppliers led them to make the decision.

Since New Year's Eve falls on a Friday night, the temporary halts are not expected to cause financial or operating burdens of any significance.

People & companies

Jeff Carowitz is the new vice president of marketing for **Hunter Industries**. Carowitz will direct marketing and promotional activities.



Allentuck Landscaping Co. has donated its landscaping services to beautify the grounds of Casa de Maryland, a nonprofit community organization committed to helping Latinos and others with many issues, including employment and training.

Jim Torrey, a 20-year landscaping veteran, has been named general manager of Keller Outdoor Services, an environmental services, landscaping, irrigation and nursery company.

Contech Construction Products announced an alliance with **Synthetic Industries** to promote and distribute Pyramat High Performance Turf Reinforcement Mat in the U.S.

Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America promoted **Jim McConnell** to manager, national fleet sales. McConnell brings nearly 15 years of truck sales experience to the position.

EPIC of Wisconsin announced the appointment of **Kristi Mirocha** to its staff as director of meeting coordination. Mirocha will research, negotiate, procure and facilitate all aspects of meeting and incentive travel programs.

Melroe of Fargo, ND, purchased **Erskine Manufac-**

turing from Wayne and Arlene Gustafson, McIntosh, Minn. The acquisition will



provide Melroe with Bobcat-branded attachments.

Don Bollmeier has been selected as **Redexim Charterhouse's** salesperson of the year. Bollmeier is a sales professional employed by Horizon Turf of Phoenix, AZ.



Red Dixon has joined **Weathermatic** as vice president of marketing.

FertiGator has named **Ann Palermo** chief sales officer.

She will oversee the company's sales operations as they relate to the independent sales representatives and wholesalers/distributors with which the company works.

FMC's specialty products business expanded and restructured its field sales force and technical service department.

Jacklin Seed has named **Derek Shaw** as a computer support technician. Shaw will

work in the information systems department and will work in all phases of technical support involving computer operation at Jacklin's Coeur d'Alene, Idaho headquarters.



Pocket Issues Guide

Act Now on
FQPA



Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment®

A Supplement to:

Landscape
MANAGEMENT



Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment®



It has loomed on the regulatory horizon for three years. Most pesticide users have heard of the Food Quality Protection Act, but in the everyday hustle and bustle of taking care of business, the FQPA may still be confusing.

Events of the last few months have brought to light the impact this act can have and what must be done by everyone who relies on pesticide products to do their jobs.

This easy-to-read pocket guide should bring you up to speed on FQPA and what you can do. Don't stop at just reading this Pocket Guide. I encourage you to contact your congressman and let your thoughts be known via e-mail, telephone, letter, fax or a personal visit.

There are those saying, "I'll just let my association and my competitors tackle this one. I'm too busy."

The company or individual who waits to see what will happen will be disappointed with the outcome. There's a greater likelihood the results will be favorable when every applicator gets involved.

Lou Kobus, a turf manager and business owner in Fairfax County, Va., says it best: "FQPA can impact your checkbook. If you don't take action, you'll wake up one morning and won't be able to do your job because valuable tools you depend on are gone."

FQPA is the biggest challenge the green industry faces. You can make a difference by reading this pocket guide, understanding the implications of FQPA and then taking action.

Pesticide manufacturers, distributors and associations such as RISE®, GCSAA and PLCAA are doing all they can. But it's important the public and politicians hear from you — the users of pesticides — as well.

Sincerely,

Allen James
Executive Director
(RISE) *Responsible Industry
for a Sound Environment*

RISE is the national association representing the manufacturers, formulators, distributors and other industry leaders involved with pesticide products used in turf, ornamental, pest control, aquatic and terrestrial vegetation management and other non-food/fiber applications. Visit our Web site at www.pestfacts.org.

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- 5 **The U.S. economy** stands to lose \$17 billion in aggregate economic output in the agricultural industry as a result of FQPA, according to a report.
- 8 **Alert your legislators** to the impact that FQPA legislation will have on your business. We offer a sample letter for you to use.

Key Contacts

For more information about FQPA, contact the following associations:



RISE
(Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)
www.pestfacts.org
202-872-3860



Golf Course Superintendents of America (GCSAA)
www.gcsaa.org
785-841-2240



Professional Lawn Care Association of America
(PLCAA)
www.plcaa.org
770-997-5222



American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA)
www.anla.org
202-789-2900

What Is FQPA?

In the summer of 1996, Congress unanimously passed, and President Clinton signed into law, the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). This landmark measure protects Americans, especially children, from potential risks associated with food.

FQPA amends two major pesticide laws: the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA). The law mandates a single, health-based standard for all pesticides in foods, special protection for infants and children and expedited approval of so-called safer pesticides.

A number of the food protection pesticides affected by the act are the same products used by turf managers and golf course superintendents in home, garden and urban settings to ensure safe and effective pest control. FQPA has broad implications for all consumers.

Within a short time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will re-evaluate almost 10,000 pesticide uses (see sidebar). This analysis determines which pesticides will remain available and which won't.

Under FQPA, EPA is mandated to use "available information" in passing judgment. Instead, EPA is making broad assumptions when information is not available – including theoretical calculations that are not based on fact. Those concerned about pest risks

EPA's Task at Hand

FQPA establishes a new safety standard for pesticide residue tolerances in food. To ensure the new standard applies to all pesticides, EPA must reassess all pesticide tolerances that were in effect when the law passed. These total 9,721 pesticides that must be reassessed by 2006.

In August, EPA completed 3,290 tolerance reassessment decisions, or a little more than the required 33 percent. Many of these were old registrations no longer in use that the EPA needed to get off its books.

Its next deadline is Aug. 3, 2002 when it must complete another 3,000 reassessments. Its final deadline to review all pesticide tolerances is Aug. 3, 2006.

to Americans are worried that "fast-track" implementation of FQPA, using insufficient data, will result in unnecessary elimination of many valuable pesticides.

Decisions must be made on actual use, not projections or assumptions. Policies must be uniform and readily understood so the law can be consistently implemented.

With so much riding on the EPA's work, the decisions the agency makes should be based on clear thinking and sound science. However, a great deal of emotional arguing has come into play, leading the EPA to make decisions based on the force of certain public opinion. Anti-pesticide activists rely heavily on emotion to influence this public opinion and EPA listens to them.

How Tolerances Effect the Green Industry

OK, so it's somewhat logical the effect FQPA has on food and agriculture. But people don't eat turf, ornamentals or trees, so how are pesticides used in the green industry affected by all of this?

Every active ingredient has hundreds of applications. One active ingredient may be effective against turf pests, but is also used for pests found in homes and agricultural fields. Considering one application at a time, this isn't a problem. FQPA, however, considers the sum total of risk associated with a given chemical and combines all of its potential uses. Risk is assessed in two ways:

Aggregate risk assessment — all the potential uses for a particular chemical added together.

Cumulative risk assessment — any risks associated with a given

The Cost of Lost Pesticides

Texas A&M University and Auburn University recently conducted a study analyzing the costs to the United States if key pesticide uses are discontinued.

A ban on organophosphates and carbamates would result in more food imports, higher food prices for Americans, less consumption of nutritionally important fruits and vegetables, lower crop yields and increased production costs for America's farmers.

A complete ban would result in a \$17 billion reduction of the nation's aggregate economic output, the loss of 209,000 jobs and would decrease income related to the production and sale of products by \$9 billion.

And that's just for the agricultural market because the study did not look at urban uses of pesticides.

chemical, plus any chemical with a similar mode of action to the first chemical, added together.

An example of a cumulative risk is that when assessing chlorpyrifos, the risk from other chemicals that aren't chlorpyrifos — but act the same way — have to be factored in to measure cumulative risk. For chlorpyrifos, this would include all other organophosphates, such as diazinon and malathion.

Once the risk is defined, how much risk is safe must be decided. For each chemical or class of chemical, the EPA creates a risk cup, which is a measure of maximum allowable safe risk for a given chemical.

To keep the cup from overflowing, the EPA decides upon the necessary action:

1. Eliminate uses — A manufacturer may be asked to eliminate the outdoor turf uses to continue agricultural uses of the same active ingredient.

2. Risk mitigation — To reduce the risk associated with the use of a product, manufacturers might mandate precautions, such as wearing head-to-toe protective equipment each time a product is handled.

3. No new uses — Refraining from adding any additional risk keeps the risk cup from overflowing.

The question for a manufacturer becomes: Is it cost-effective to support the use of an active ingredient in a small market like turf care or continue its use in a bigger market like agriculture?

Fair Implementation Is Main Concern

"We're supportive of the basic concepts of FQPA and are confident that it could be implemented reasonably," says Allen James, executive director of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment).

RISE, the national association representing manufacturers, formulators, distributors and other industry leaders involved with specialty pesticide products, along with numerous applicator associations, is working to assure fair implementation of FQPA.

"If EPA doesn't implement the law fully and fairly, many effective and reliable pesticide uses could be lost to businesses and consumers that rely upon these products," James explains.

As a result of the way EPA is implementing FQPA, turf management professionals may lose valuable pesticides. As these pesticides are lost, turf managers won't be able to properly apply Integrated Pest Management measures.

Let Yourself Be Heard on FQPA

FQPA could have a devastating effect on your business if improperly implemented by EPA. So what is a pesticide applicator to do? Speak out for full and fair implementation of the law.

Here's how:

- Tell your business associates and employees about FQPA. Urge them to push for fair implementation.
- Write, email, fax, call or visit your congressperson and ask each of them to ensure FQPA is implemented fairly by voting yes for H.R. 1592 in the House of Representatives and S. 1464 in Senate. See the sample letter on the next page.
- Need to find out who your congressperson is and how to contact him or her? Visit one of these Web sites:
 - <http://congress.nw.dc.us/usatoday/elecmail.html>
 - www.house.gov/writerep/
 - www.senate.gov
- Call the Capitol switchboard in Washington, D.C, at 202-224-3121.
- Organize a FQPA grassroots initiative with your association or join one that has already been organized.
- Identify the chemicals of critical importance to your job, then prioritize them. Closely monitor the progress of EPA in regard to the critical chemicals. Visit the EPA FQPA Web site at www.epa.gov/pesticides and click on FQPA to monitor progress of pesticides being assessed.
- Comment on EPA risk assessments as a member of the public (which includes pesticide users). To see the schedule for public comment go to www.epa.gov/pesticides/op.



Sample Letter

Whether you mail or fax a letter or send an e-mail to your Congressperson, here are some important things to remember:

- Let them know who you are, where you're from, what you do and why FQPA is important to you.
- Tell them how long you've been in business and who your customers are. Explain how using a particular pesticide helps in your control program of a particular pest.
- Be specific, project professionalism and be honest.

Here's a sample letter that you can tailor to fit your needs:

Date

The Honorable (Congressperson's Name)
U.S. House of Representatives or U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515 or 20510

Dear Representative or Senator (NAME):

I am a (golf course superintendent, lawn care operator, landscaper, etc.) from (town, state), where I (describe your business/job). However, I am very concerned that some of the pesticides I use to protect (golf courses, lawns, urban areas) may not be available in the future because of the Environmental Protection Agency's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act.

While I support the goals of FQPA, I believe that the EPA should base its decisions about certain pesticides on sound science and real-life uses. So far, the EPA is working from theoretical data, worst-case scenarios and assumptions that could result in the unnecessary loss of safe pesticides. A clear, predictable and reliable regulatory process needs to be developed by the EPA for pesticide risk assessments.

Please co-sponsor and vote YES for the FQPA Regulatory Openness and Fairness Act of 1999, (SELECT ONE: H.R. 1592 in the House of Representatives or S.B. 1464 in the Senate).

My fear is that although the turf and ornamental industry accounts for a small number of uses for certain pesticides, manufacturers will be forced to eliminate these applications from the market in favor of uses in bigger markets. If this happens, I will be left without tools to do my job, even though these same products could have met the safety standard if EPA followed a reliable evaluation process.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Name
Address

What Others Are Doing

RISE is just one of many associations and industry groups taking action. Here are what others are doing:



DELANEY

Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA)

"We've made FQPA our main legislative effort," says Tom Delaney, PLCAA executive vice president.

During its annual "Day on the Hill," 70 lawn care operators from 18 states met with key congressional committee members in Washington, D.C., to urge action on FQPA.

PLCAA also encourages members to get involved in their own community, not just with FQPA, but other pesticide issues as well.

"There's only so much the association can do. Then it's up to our members," says Delaney. "Involvement in issues is a must for lawn care managers who want to stay in business long-term," he adds.

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)

This summer, GCSAA launched an associationwide grassroots campaign with a mailing to all 101 chapters complete with follow-up phone calls. Articles were placed on the GCSAA Web site and in the association's Greens & Grassroots newsletters. Chapters and individuals that contribute to the FQPA effort are recognized.

"At least 60 of the 101 chapters have taken action, and those are just the ones we know about," says Carrie Riordan, GCSAA's government relations manager. In the Florida Chapter alone, 150 members have written letters to Congress.

Superintendents are also participating in editorial board meetings arranged to discuss FQPA implications with media in cities throughout the United States.

Novartis Crop Protection Co.

With an employee dedicated to managing FQPA, Novartis, like many pesticide manufacturers that sell organophosphates, is busy pulling data together and developing new risk-assessment methods.

Tom Beidler has been the FQPA issues manager for the company for 1½ years.

"Novartis is working toward a goal of providing the tools necessary for conducting scientifically sound risk assessments," he adds. The risk assessment for Novartis' pesticide diazinon is scheduled for preliminary review by the EPA this year.

A few of the studies and assessments the company is involved with include the Organophosphate Market Basket Survey, which involves sampling the U.S. food supply to determine OP residues; the OP Case Study, which has as its primary objective the development of a cumulative risk assessment for five pesticides; and CARES (Cumulative/Aggregate Risk Evaluation System), a software program development project spearheaded by Novartis that will evaluate and quantify exposures to pesticides by all possible dietary and non-dietary routes.

What They Say About FQPA

"Factors used to calculate daily exposures to handlers are based on best professional judgment due to a lack of pertinent data."

— from EPA's preliminary risk assessment
on residential use of Di-Syston

"The EPA's restrictions are driven by factors other than science. EPA administrator Carol Browner herself stated that 'the benefits of a diet that includes fruits and vegetables far outweigh risks of pesticides.' This is the message that should be coming through loud and clear, but is unfortunately muddled by unscientific cries of environmental hysterics."

— Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, President of the
American Council on Science and Health

"The major contributor to the risk of cancer is not so much any specific chemical in food. Far more significant are the amount and variety of food consumed — and specifically the excess calories a person eats."

— Dr. Ronald Estabrook, member,
National Academy of Sciences

"EPA claims to know what is the best way to protect crops and reduce risks from pesticide residues. With its regulatory blinders firmly in place, the agency is focusing on eliminating pesticides with a long history of effective and safe use, expecting them to be replaced by lower-risk alternatives. EPA's version of the 'Field of Dreams' theme is, 'If you ban it, better replacements will come.'

— Kenneth W. Chilton, Ph.D, senior fellow/manager of environmental research, Washington University, in article distributed by
Knight Ridder/Tribune

RISE Resources

Local Issues Plan of Action (LIPA)

RISE's LIPA program is designed to help you combat unreasonable objections to the use of pesticides in your community. Providing you with tips on everything from how to spot antipesticide initiatives to positive messages you can use to educate your community, the LIPA program can be ordered by calling 202-872-3860. The program also urges everyone to keep RISE informed of any antipesticide initiatives so it can take appropriate action.

www.pestfacts.org

The new RISE Web site is packed with information for those looking for the latest information on pesticide issues. The site provides facts about pests, tips on how to use pesticides responsibly and links with other industry sites. With nine sections, ranging from news and information to a section that allows you to get immediate updates on pesticide issues, the RISE site is a must-bookmark for all those interested in staying abreast of what's going on in the pesticide industry.

The screenshot shows the 'Pest Facts Information Center' website. At the top, it says 'October 21, 1999' and 'Online Pesticide News'. Below this is a 'Top Stories' section with four items:

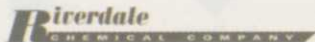
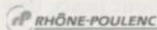
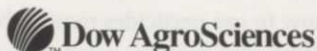
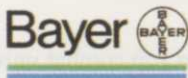
- 1. Crumpled Details Still Puts Children's Health at Risk**
RISE Press Release
- 2. Fire Ants Can Attack Industry**
Several cases of indoor fire ant attacks have been reported.
- 3. Pesticide continues to be a serious public health concern**
Since January 1, 1999, more than 270 million people have been afflicted with malaria. Effective insecticides are needed to control the spread of this disease around the world.
- 4. Part of the Month - Pesticide Back To Top**

On the left side, there are navigation links: 'The Problems with Pests', 'Safe & Responsible Pesticide Use', 'Facts About Pesticides', 'News & Information', and 'Links'. On the right side, there are links for 'Children's Health at Schools', 'Frequently Asked Questions', 'A World From the Sponsor', and 'Receive Updates'. At the bottom, there is a copyright notice: 'Copyright © 1999, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment). All rights reserved. RISE, 1156 15th Street, NW Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005 ph: 202-872-3860. Fax: 202-463-0474'.

Pocket Issues Guide

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DeltaGard™



A Supplement to:

Landscape
MANAGEMENT

Surfin' Turf

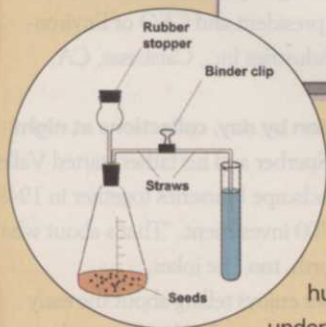
Lessons from the rain forest

Rain Bird Rain Forest Curriculum Rain Bird Sprinkler Mfg. Corp.

<http://www.rainbird.com/rainforest>

Here's a neat public service idea from Rain Bird. It formed a partnership with California Polytechnic Institute's College of Science to create a K-8 environmental science teaching module and put it up on its Web site for free distribution.

The university tie assured Rain Bird, a manufacturer of sprinkler/irrigation systems, that the modules were presented in a manner useful for the intended audience: educators and students. A smart effort like this helps Rain Bird spread its name farther than it might if it remained focused only on the business of selling sprinklers. The modules include a variety of interesting grade-level appropriate experi-



◀ This experiment on the website demonstrates that gas is released by germinating seeds.

ments ranging from a first-grade leaf hunt to helping eighth-graders see pollen under a microscope.

In this case, a little public service goes a long way toward creating a positive corporate image that speaks to more concerns than just selling irrigation systems.

Visitors can also click directly into Rain Bird's home site to find more about landscape and turf irrigation systems, Year 2000 readiness, site progress reports and Spanish language operating manuals.

— CURT HARLER

PLCAA promotes careers at FFA convention

Louisville, KY — As we reported last month, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America hopes to encourage Future Farmers of America members to choose a career in the lawn and landscape industry.

To help with this effort, PLCAA exhibited at the FFA convention here last month and gave away two \$500 scholarships. Bill Hoopes, PLCAA board member, and Tom Delaney, PLCAA executive director, also judged the 1999 Turfgrass Management Proficiency Award.

Trees go to tornado victims

Dallas — Trees from Texas A&M's Agricultural Extension Service will be planted this spring here, in the hopes of bringing some comfort to those whose houses were devastated by a tornado this past May.

"We hope these trees will signify a new beginning and recovery to those who lost so much in the Moore tornado," said Steve George, an extension horticulturalist at Texas A&M in Dallas. "It's so disheartening to see old trees destroyed when they've been part of your home for years."

George recently loaded up a truck with 250 Shantung Maple trees and drove them to Oklahoma to be planted by residents who lost their homes. Two trees were given to each person attending either of two community workshops about how to save storm-damaged trees, how to decide if a tree can't be saved and what and how to replant.

TruGreen-LandCare keeps buying

Memphis — True to their word, TruGreen-LandCare, Memphis, continues its fast pace of acquisitions through the year. The most recent firms to enter the fold include:

- ▶ Shady Knoll Landscape Services Inc., Hopewell, NJ
- ▶ Lawncos Landscaping Inc., Wilmington, NC;
- ▶ Greenleaves Inc., Monroe, GA; and
- ▶ Clean Lawn Service Inc.; Wilmington, DE

[CLIPPINGS]

People of the Year

Person of the Year in Landscape Contracting

Burton S. Sperber

BY SUE GIBSON

**President and CEO,
Environmental
Industries Inc.,
Calabasas, CA**



(left to right)
Richard A. Sperber,
Burton Sperber,
and Stewart J.
Sperber

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ▶ Established Valley Crest Landscape Nurseries in 1949 with \$700
- ▶ Licensed landscape architect, engineer and landscape contractor
- ▶ Grows Environmental Industries Inc. to \$436 million in revenue for 1998 revenues with 5,500 employees and five operating divisions
- ▶ One of original founders of Associated Landscape Contractors of America
- ▶ Funded landscape scholarships for 40 years

This story starts like many others: A young man of 19 loves landscape work, takes a big chance and starts a business. He invests his meager savings, works long and hard hours to make a go of it and learns many lessons along the way.

Years later, some look back and know they've succeeded more than they ever thought; others see they never quite got the hang of it. But only one can look back after 50 years and see his business has become the industry's largest private firm: Burton S. Sperber, president and CEO of Environmental Industries Inc., Calabasas, CA.

Installation by day, collections at night

Burt Sperber and his father started Valley Crest Landscape Nurseries together in 1949 with a \$700 investment. "That's about what it was worth, too," he jokes.

Sperber enjoys telling about the early years, when he installed landscapes during the day, then sold more work, made collections and paid his suppliers in the evenings.

"My early challenges were making our weekly payroll, staying focused on making customers happy and building great gardens," he recalls. Today, the last two are still his focus.

As for making payroll, things are lot different at Environmental Industries Inc.,



◀ Burt Sperber (far left), stands with his original crew around 1950.

▶ Burt Sperber rests in front of the original Valley Crest Landscape Nurseries, North Hollywood CA, ca. 1949



which last year had revenues of \$436 million. The company blossomed in southern California's post-World War II years. Sperber earned his landscape architect, engineering and landscape contractor's licenses in the 1950s. Large-scale projects at California schools and highways, housing developments, golf courses and commercial buildings gave Valley Crest opportunities to grow.

The company became Environmental Industries Inc. in 1969, and today has 5,500 employees working in five operating divisions throughout the United States:

- ▶ Valley Crest (landscape site development and construction, theming, specialty services, landscape products);
- ▶ Environmental Care Inc. (landscape, tree and water management);
- ▶ Valley Crest Tree Co. (specimen tree growing, relocation, preservation, nursery);
- ▶ U.S. Lawns (landscape maintenance franchises); and
- ▶ Environmental Golf (course construction, management, maintenance).

Family operation first

Sperber's younger brother Stuart joined the firm in its second decade, managing Valley Crest Tree Co. Together, the brothers developed wooden tree boxes to protect specimen trees. "It was an expensive way to be in the nursery business because we were spending money before we sold the trees," Sperber says.

The nursery's quality is key to its reputation. "Lots of landscape architects specify that the plant material on a job must be 'Valley Crest' quality or better," he notes.

The family tradition continued when Richard Sperber, Burt's son, joined the firm. He now serves as president and COO of Valley Crest and Environmental Golf, as

well as senior vice president of Environmental Industries.

Sperber stresses that hundreds and hundreds of field employees have worked for the company for 20 or 30 years, and the average tenure of more than 70 executive managers is 17 years. "This is a family-run company and our employees feel they're part of the family," he says.

Finding and keeping employees is almost a second focus at EII. "Every day, we're doing \$2 million worth of work and have to hire two new employees just to sustain our growth," Sperber notes.

Acquiring people along with acquisitions is a key part of any deal, Sperber notes. "In our acquisitions, the employees and principals typically stay with us," he says.

He stresses that unlike many of the new consolidators, EII puts top priority on people in an acquisition. "When we make an acquisition, the major thing we're interested in are the people," he says.

Giant steps

Few landscape firms offer complete vertical integration of services, and none do it on the scale of EII. Like a perpetual motion machine, it is EII's size and ability to handle massive projects that keep it profitable and competitive. According to Sperber, this offers several advantages:

- ▶ Long-term people. "Our leaders are people who could be in business for themselves, but we've taken out all of the risk, yet have a reward system similar to what they would have in business for themselves," he explains. "And they don't have to worry about dealing with insurance, lawyers, bankers, accountants, bonding companies — all the things that drive people crazy. All they have to do is be good landscape people."

▶ Vertical integration. "We've built a machine in our landscape division that has little competition in the United States; we're about 10 times larger than our nearest competitor," Sperber explains.

▶ Profitability. Sperber notes that EII grew internally by \$85 million last year, without acquisitions. It also operates with an incredibly low overhead rate.

▶ Work quality. Asked his toughest challenge, he replied, "maintaining quality and our reputation." He cited customers who have had continuous service since 1968 ("forever in our business"), as well as EII's focus on maintaining consistent service.


Industry leadership

Before the trade associations came into their own, Sperber supported student scholarships in horticulture and landscape architecture. "We've recruited at colleges for years," he remarks, noting that EII has given scholarships and had formal training for 40 years. Currently, it supports 21 different college programs.

Sperber was a founding member of ALCA and helped establish chapters of the California Landscape Contractor's Association, once serving as its president. He has also provided memberships for EII staff who wish to be active in regional and national industry associations.

Currently, he is hosting the third annual Mergers & Acquisitions Conference, to be held in San Francisco in January 2000.

"It's something I can do to try and give back to the industry more than it's given me," he notes, reflecting on the company's 50 years of operation. "My job now is transferring leadership to a lot of people at EII. I was just lucky enough to be the guy who started it."



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