

# Why do we put up with bullies?

I hate bullies. Stupid me, though — I didn't learn how to deal with them until after I'd suffered months of silent anger and personal anguish. While it took a neighborhood bully's actions to open my eyes, we in the professional landscape/lawn industry seem to be always relearning the same lesson.

Consider the bullies who want to stop us from delivering the professional services we have every right to offer. For years, they've campaigned against our use of chemical tools. Now, their ill will is spreading like cancer. Some have begun demanding that lawmakers forbid the use of these tools on turfgrass and ornamentals for 'aesthetic' or 'non-essential' reasons.

That's an astounding demand. Other bullies (by definition, bullies are also cowards) seem to have the moral, if not legal, right to destroy valuable private property, as evidenced by dead-of-the-night raids on turfgrass breeding efforts in Oregon.

In their singlemindedness, bullies don't see any demand or threat as too outrageous. That's one reason we don't deal with them as we should. In fact, we do an awful job of it. Dreading confrontation, we seek compromise. We delude ourselves into thinking that unreasonable people will engage in reasonable dialogue with us. Stranger yet, we ignore all warning signs and hope the poison behind their actions evaporates and floats away.

Actually, we embolden bullies with our inaction. We invite them to perform even more outrageous actions and concoct even more outlandish demands. I've been there, and I can tell you — it's better to deal with a bully from the get-go.

## The bully on the block

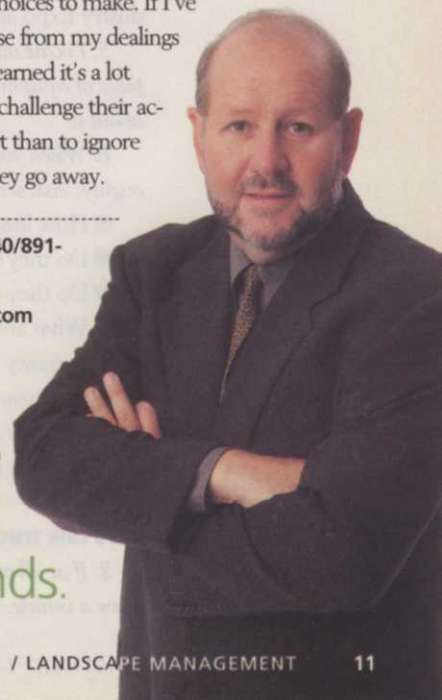
Consider my experiences with a neighborhood bully who convinced himself he had the right to drive his pickup truck into the front or rear of any vehicle parked on the street too close to his property. Unfortunately, his house is across the street from mine. As the months passed, he began lacing his actions with threats, sometimes verbal or handwritten notes he inserted under the offending vehicles' wiper blades.

Finally, it occurred to me that a neighborly relationship us wasn't going to happen between us and probably wasn't worth pursuing anyway. That's when I insisted that local authorities take action. Through phone calls, letters and personal visits, I made it known I wouldn't tolerate these actions and would take "any and all" legal action to stop them. It took lots of my time and energy to straighten out this problem, and I now realize that if I had shown some backbone when these incidents first started I would have, if nothing else, earned some measure of respect, if not in his eyes, than certainly in my own. And I would have saved myself and my family a lot of unpleasantness.

As an industry, we're faced with the same bullying tactics, with similar choices to make. If I've learned nothing else from my dealings with bullies, I've learned it's a lot better to face and challenge their actions from the start than to ignore them and hope they go away.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636 or e-mail at [rhall@advanstar.com](mailto:rhall@advanstar.com)

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Maintain good records on all pieces of equipment, and put them in a separate storage area.

## Maintenance does matter

**F**rom 21 years of trial and error, here are a few things about equipment maintenance that I've learned the hard way.

1. *Don't wait for downtime to perform needed maintenance.* The longer you let something go, the worse it gets.

2. *Employ your own mechanic.* Realistically, most of us can't afford to do that, so it's important to build a strong relationship with a reliable service center.

3. *Maintain good records on all pieces of equipment, and put them in a separate storage area.* Also keep a running maintenance file on each major piece of equipment that contains all receipts regarding each one's care.

4. *Before buying any new piece of equipment, "kick the tires."* State field days and such events as the Green Industry Expo are excellent places to do this.

5. *Locate others in your industry who actually own a piece of equipment you're about to buy and ask them about it.*

6. *When you decide to buy, research the dealer thoroughly!* Ask serious questions:

- How long has the dealer been a dealer?
- Do they regularly stock commonly used parts?
- Do they employ an experienced mechanic?
- What are their service policies and how do they treat warranty work?

7. *After you buy, you will discover that every piece of equipment has a few parts that frequently wear.* Whenever you have to replace one of these, buy two.

### Let's talk trucks!

8. *If at all possible, limit the number of people who drive a vehicle.* Not only does it get driven one way all



Keeping tabs on your trucks' maintenance needs will keep them around longer.

the time, but the driver will almost certainly take some "possession" of it and thus look out for its welfare.

9. *As your operation grows, keep a spare truck around to fill-in, or replace another that is down for maintenance.* Doing this with other equipment is often easier and less expensive than actually keeping an extra vehicle or two. It always amazes me as to how frequently each week they are used.

10. *For all equipment maintenance, keep a blackboard.* As maintenance problems come to your attention, list them on a large "To Do List" or "Rainy Day Board" that is posted in a visible location.

Finally, maintain equipment well enough to give it a long useful life span. At the same time, be aware that older equipment may be costing you more to maintain than it is worth. When that time arrives, as painful as it may be, cut loose and move on.

— The author is president of The Greenskeeper, Carmel, IN, and past president of PLCAA. He can be reached at 317/846-7131.



Equipment Knowledge: Check

Local Ownership: Check

Professional Advice: Check

Mechanical Expertise: Check



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# industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Bayer buys Aventis

LONDON — Aventis CropScience, one of the world's three biggest makers of farm chemicals, will be sold to Bayer. Some wire reports put the unit's estimated value at around 3.7 billion euro (\$3.14 billion) plus about 2 billion euros in debt. Reuters reports analysts predicted the price to be 6 to 8 billion euros (\$5.1-6.8 billion) including the debt.

## ALCA premiers 'Business Boot Camp'

Herndon, VA — Business basics on marketing, management and finances will be featured at ALCA's first 'Business Boot Camp,' scheduled for Sept. 26 in Baltimore and Oct. 6 in Chicago. Landscape Management is a media sponsor of this event, which will feature former landscaper David Minor. For information, contact ALCA at 800/395-2522 or [www.alca.org](http://www.alca.org).

## Griffin registers new product

VALDOSTA, GA — Griffin LLC received registration for a dry flowable formulation of its chlorothalonil fungicide. This new product, called Concorde DF, is available from distributors.

## SRO cuts royalty check for U of A

TUCSON, AZ — Seed Research of Oregon (SRO) representatives recently delivered a \$13,507 royalty check to the University of Arizona's turfgrass research program. The money represented 100,000 lbs. of seed sold by SRO in 1999.

CLIPPINGS

## Canadian Supreme Court upholds Quebec ban on residential use of pesticides

Decision may give broad control to Canadian municipal authorities

BY LYNNE BRAKEMAN, ON LINE CONTENT EDITOR

OTTAWA, CANADA — The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that local authorities have the right to ban the residential use of pesticides.

The court dismissed the appeal of two Canadian lawn care companies, Spraytech and Chemlawn (now Greenspace Services), against the municipality of Hudson, Quebec.

"We're still in our fox holes!" joked Gavin Dawson, technical manager at Greenspace Services when *Landscape Management* asked him what might happen next.

Dawson says industry stakeholders are having their attorneys review the decision. He says, at the moment, no one is sure whether it will be valid for municipalities throughout Canada. Greenspace's official position is that it applies only in the province of Quebec.

"The whole industry has made a collective effort to fight the discriminatory by-law, which, by its nature, targets the lawn-care industry in Hudson," says Greenspace in its official statement on the decision.

### Background

In 1991, Hudson passed Bylaw-270 banning pesticides for aesthetic reasons. The bylaw only allows the use of pesticides to control or destroy insects, animals or plants that constitute a danger to human beings.



More residential landscapes like this one could be pesticide-free if Canadian municipalities have their way.

The law does not apply to farms; golf courses were given a five-year exemption.

In November 1992, the companies were cited with violating the bylaw. They sued, saying the municipality could not ban chemicals that had been approved as safe by the federal government. The companies lost their case, appealed to district court, lost again and now have lost their final appeal to the Supreme court.

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"We are disappointed that the Supreme Court agreed that a Quebec municipality had the power to impose another level of legislation

— Lorne Hepworth, President (CPI)

continued from page 16

In a unanimous decision, the court said that the bylaw did not conflict with any federal or provincial law and that the Quebec Cities and Towns act gives the town the authority to pass such bylaws for the health and general welfare of its citizens.

More than 30 Quebec towns and the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia have enacted similar bans since 1991.

#### Activist, industry reaction

While Canadian environmental activists celebrated the decision, Canadian Green Industry stakeholders predict chaos at the local level.

"We are disappointed that the Supreme Court agreed that a Quebec municipality had the power to impose another level of legislation, in addition to the stringent regulatory systems of both the federal and provincial government," said Lorne Hepworth, President of the Canadian Crop Protection Institute (CPI).

"Canada's regulatory system, including Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), is one of the most rigorous in the world," Hepworth added. "The strength of our regulatory system, with its hundreds of qualified scientists, ensures that none of our products reach the marketplace unless they present no unacceptable risk to the user or the environment. Furthermore, both industry and government are constantly monitoring and testing the products to ensure safety on an ongoing basis."

"Since the definition of aesthetic has not been scientifically established, this could vary from one municipality to the next," said Kimberley Bates, Executive Director of the Urban Pest Management Council of Canada, an affiliate of CPI. "The result could be chaos and a patchwork of municipal by-laws across the country. It will be

costly to hire and train staff. With only a sign separating many municipalities, ban-

ning activities for aesthetic reasons will be virtually impossible to enforce."

## Weed Man spokesman calls for lawn care operators to mobilize

Canadian lawn applications companies are bracing for a rash of local laws aimed at restricting or banning the use of pesticides following a decision announced June 27 by the Supreme Court of Canada.



Kernaghan

"We've been expecting this decision for quite some time now," said Michael Kernaghan, a spokesman for Weed Man, the largest lawn care application company in Canada. "It went uglier than we expected."

The Court ruled that the small Montreal suburb of Hudson was within its rights when in 1991 it banned the use of pesticides on home lawns, while allowing their continued use on golf courses and farms. In passing the bylaw, Hudson lawmakers cited health concerns over the use of the lawn chemicals.

"From a legal perspective, I think the ruling has created more confusion than it's clarified," added Kernaghan. "It appears to be saying, 'We don't want to hear from every other province on this matter, so we're going to come up with a ruling that sweeps right across the country.' This is crucial to our industry."

#### Environmentalists gearing up

Meanwhile, anti-pesticide crusaders rubbed their hands in anticipation of the spread of local laws forbidding the use of lawn care chemicals within their borders.

"We're thrilled. We've had municipalities across Canada just waiting with their fingers crossed for this decision," said Angela Rickman, head of the pesticide reduction campaign of the Sierra Club of Canada. Anti-pesticide activists claim there are more than 36 other Quebec towns, as well as the city of Halifax, that have taken action against lawn care chemicals.

"There could be brush fires everywhere," acknowledged Weed Man's Kernaghan, who says the country's lawn application industry faces its biggest challenge ever. In addition to intensifying its lobbying efforts at the federal and provincial levels, Kernaghan said the industry must mount "a grassroots effort" in the face of the ruling.

"We have to mobilize every lawn care operator out there and mobilize our customers," said Kernaghan. "We have to articulate our position and be a part of the process, participating in public hearings and working groups, and getting through to every counselor in every community where this could be a problem."

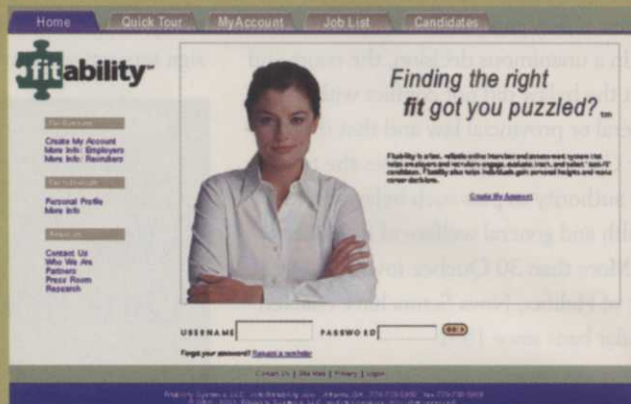
—Ron Hall

## Surfin' Turf

### Who's got personality?

Tell a Green Industry professional that it's tough to find good employees these days, and you're likely to hear him reply, "Tell me something I don't know." That's when you can tell him about [www.fitability.com](http://www.fitability.com), a Web site that claims to be a leading provider of online interviewing and personality assess-

ment services that provides employers, recruiters and job seekers with tools to identify the "best fit" between a person and a job. Not sure if the guy you're about to interview who last worked at a gas station is right for the job? Assess him on-line in a 15-minute interview with [fitability.com](http://fitability.com)'s new online personality assess-



ment service, "Fitability for Employers." What's cool is that there's no "up front" fees, no software licenses to

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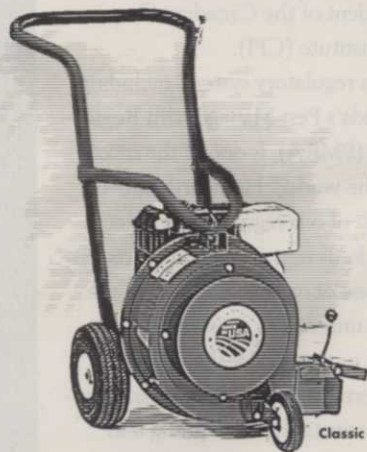
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