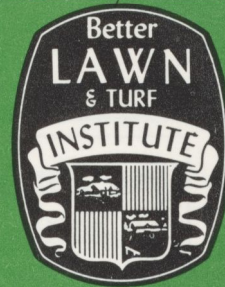


THE Lawn Institute Digest

FORMERLY Harvests

James B Beard



FALL, 1992

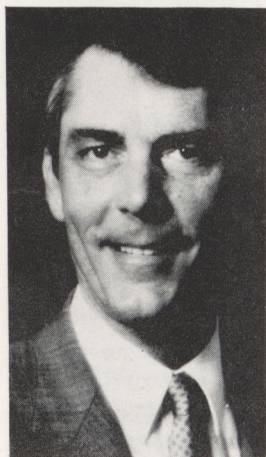
NEW LOOK, NEW DIRECTIONS, NEW ADDRESS FOR THE LAWN INSTITUTE

THE LAWN INSTITUTE DIGEST is the new name for what was formally called *Harvests*. The format and content have changed as well. The editorial plan is to provide you with views, perspectives, and information on a wide variety of topics and issues concerning the turfgrass industry generally not found in other publications.

The interview with Jeff and Liz Ball, authors of "Yardening," presents a number of views on the lawncare needs and concerns of the majority of homeowners, plus suggestions on what the industry can do to better serve the homeowner.

The editorial plan is to provide you with views, perspectives, and information on a wide variety of topics and issues concerning the industry not found in other publications.

—Jim Brooks



"Water Restrictions—Becoming Part of the Ordinance Making Process" describes a major issue that the turfgrass industry will have to confront more and more as greater demands are made for water conservation.

EPA's guidebook, "Cooling Our Communities," enumerates a number of environmental policy suggestions that would have a major impact on the turfgrass industry.

Many of us try to communicate our message to the consumer through the media. Bob LaGasse's article gives some insights on what kinds of information the garden communicator is looking for to impart to the readers.

And there's more in this first issue of *The Lawn Institute Digest* we hope you will find of interest.

New Programs Coming—There are some new programs currently in the planning stages. Numerous industries, like packaged food, have successfully used the container to communicate with and make offers to the consumer. The turfgrass industry has a perfect vehicle with the seed bag or box to offer the homeowner sound information on proper lawn care maintenance practices and the environmental benefits of planting improved turf varieties. With

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COLLECTION**

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DR. WILLIAM E. KNOOP TO SERVE IN TECHNICAL ADVISORY CAPACITY TO THE LAWN INSTITUTE.

Dr. Bill Knoop, professor and extension turfgrass specialist at Texas A & M University at Dallas, has agreed to assist The Lawn Institute as technical director, a newly created advisory position. His responsibilities will include: technical editor of Lawn Institute publications, conference speaker, and technical resource spokesperson.

Knoop is well-known in the turfgrass industry as an extension specialist, conference speaker, teacher, author, researcher, and advisor to several turf-related organizations. His consumer education program, "Don't Bag It," designed to reduce the flow of grass clippings and other landscape debris from the solid-waste stream received national attention and won an award for Environmental Excellence from the EPA. Bill has recently developed a "Water Smart" program and kit for Texas homeowners that shows them how to use water more efficiently, both inside and outside their homes.

Bill Knoop has a wealth of knowledge and experience working with and knowing the needs of the homeowner, as well as turfgrass professionals. His technical expertise will be a major asset to The Lawn Institute, and will nicely compliment the marketing, promotion, and management skills of Jim Brooks, the Institute's new executive director. Brooks and Knoop previously worked together at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) from 1974-1976.

Knoop will advise the Institute from Dallas. He can be reached by first calling The Lawn Institute office in Marietta, GA, (404) 977-5492. ❖

NEW LOOK, NEW DIRECTIONS *Continued*

the cooperation of the seed producers, distributors, and retailers. The Lawn Institute plans to promote a major consumer education program through a coupon/offer series of lawn information pamphlets. Additionally, we are reviewing the standards by which all turfgrass seed can be evaluated for qualification to carry the institute's "Seal of Approval." Providing the Seal of Approval on the seed container will give consumers assurance that they are buying quality grass seed. Though still being developed, the standards will meet or exceed most state's seed certification standards.

There is also the possibility of starting a subscription quarterly newsletter for consumers. If Jeff and Liz Ball are correct in their assessment of the consumer need for "how to" lawn and landscape information, we have a golden opportunity to reach out and help the homeowner via the seed container.

There is a growing need to establish a centralized databank on information relating to benefits and economic impact of the turfgrass industry. There is a significant amount of existing information and scientific data, but it is scattered throughout the country among a wide range of sources. As a recognized resource and representative for the industry, The Lawn Institute is exploring ways to collect data and become the central repository of environmental and economic data for the industry.

Additionally, there is a need to fund and conduct more individual state turfgrass surveys to further verify the economic and environmental importance of the industry. The Lawn Institute plans to take a leading role in encouraging the funding and support of such surveys.

The Lawn Institute is beginning a major membership campaign among all sectors of the turfgrass industry. It is critical that we secure the support needed to better promote and defend the industry. As Bruce Shank, publisher of *Landscape & Irrigation*, said in a recent editorial, "The turf industry as a whole needs an organized defense. It's no longer a case of one variety over another. It's a case of turf over dirt or pavement. And it not only affects the seed grower, but also the landscape contractor and every person who makes a living planting and maintaining turf. The Lawn Institute works for all of us." ❖

THE LIGHTER SIDE

Man, Wife Arrested for Not Watering Lawn

Fred and Venda Bytendorp say that the death of their lawn was an accident. Tell it to the Judge.

The Bytendorps could get 30 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine after being cited for failing to maintain their landscape.

The two said they thought the defoliant they used was an insecticide. But Bytendorp said he made the mistake of joking that he was protesting water rates as a city inspector surveyed the barren, yellow landscape.

"Had he quit watering his lawn because of the drought, nobody would have bothered with it," City Attorney Clint Balmforth said. "But the reports say that he killed this lawns in protest of a high water bill. There are two sides to this story."

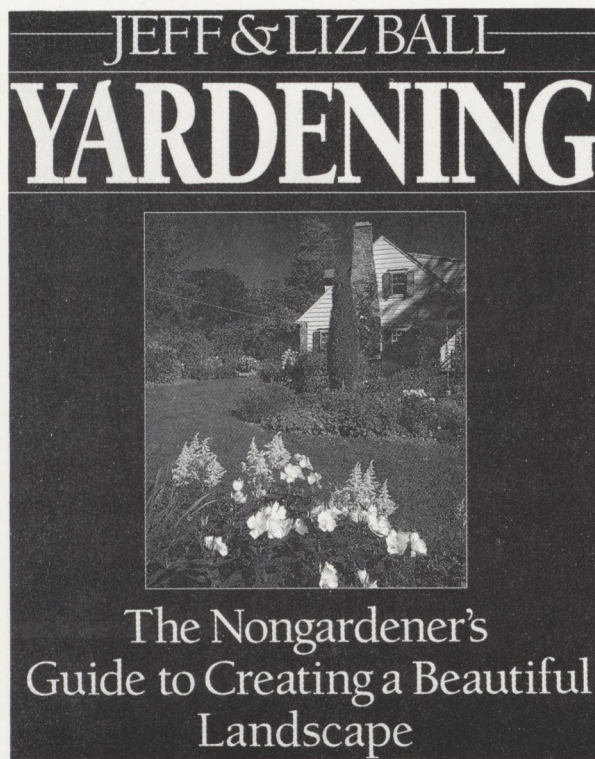
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JEFF & LIZ BALL, AUTHORS OF "YARDENING"

I recently finished reading YARDENING by Jeff & Liz Ball and I was impressed with their fresh approach...a "nongardener's guide to creating a beautiful landscape." This should be on your list of books to read. Go buy a copy! You can find it in better bookstores for \$24.95 and \$32.50 in Canada. Macmillan published it in 1991. —Jim Brooks

Over the past 10 years, Jeff and Liz Ball have been involved in the horticultural arena. They have written books and articles, produced videos and television programs, and developed computer software to help American homeowners learn to be successful using products and supplies sold by the green industry for residential landscapes.

They have been good friends with The Lawn Institute over the past several years. Recently, they finished a tour of Home Shows in eight cities (Miami, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, and Syracuse).

They spent three days in each city giving lawn care workshops and had a collective audience of over 4,000 people. "It was a stimulating and thought-provoking experience," Liz commented. "As we write and speak to our neighbors, citizen groups, and visitors to home shows, we are developing a strong



"As we write and speak to our neighbors, citizen groups, and visitors to home shows, we are developing a strong sense of the needs and frustrations of these folks we call 'yardeners',"

— Jeff Ball

sense of the needs and frustrations of these folks we call 'yardeners'," added Jeff.

I asked if they would share some of their comments, observations, thoughts, and suggestions, with The Lawn Institute. They agreed, and the following is the telephone interview we had in late August.

JIM BROOKS - When we first began to talk, you mentioned that you had stopped writing exclusively for "gardeners" and are now addressing the much larger group of homeowners you call "yardeners." What are yardeners?

LIZ: Yardeners are people who own homes that have lawns (2000 sq. ft. and up), some trees and shrubs, and maybe some flowers. They may even have a tomato plant or two, and certainly have at least one houseplant. However, they do not identify themselves as gardeners. Often busy professionals, they prefer to devote their valuable free time to kids, golf, tennis, or civic/church activities.

They want to have attractive landscapes and they are sensitive to environmental concerns. However, they regard caring for their yard and garden as simply part of their duty as homeowners. They want to accomplish these tasks with as little imposition on their time and energy as possible. We're

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JEFF & LIZ BALL

Continued

trying to address their need for practical information in our books, videos, tip sheets, and Jeff's TV appearances.

JIM: How large a segment are these gardeners and do they spend money on green industry products?

JEFF: There are likely at least twice as many gardeners as there are gardeners in the consumer market place. We figure there are about 55 million homes in America that have lawns, trees, shrubs, and other plants that need tools and supplies sold by the green industry. To be realistic, we assume that about 25% or about 15 million of those homeowners don't care much about the appearance of their landscape and are not particularly good customers in garden centers, nurseries and hardware stores. The most recent statistics from the National Gardening Association indicate that there are over 30 million gardeners in this country by their definition of "gardener." Our estimate is that only about 10 million American homeowners garden seriously and consider gardening to be a significant hobby or past time. Thus, we believe that there are roughly 20 million non-gardening homeowners who care for their residential landscapes and purchase tools and products from the green industry. If our estimates are in the ball park, then more than 60% of the estimated \$22 billion spent on yard care/ gardening products and services were spent by these people we call "yardeners".

JIM: You've worked and visited with over 4000 homeowners recently during your home show tour. What were these people telling you?

LIZ: Judging from the questions and concerns voiced at our many public appearances, there is unbelievable ig-

norance out in the lawn marketplace. When we realize that lawn care has been a major industry over the last 25 years, it is really mind-blowing to realize that American homeowners, even old-timers, are still so ill-informed about grass and lawn care practices. Listen to these few examples of misinformation that are still in circulation throughout the country:

1. Grass clippings are bad for the lawn. They cause thatch and kill the grass.

2. Grass should be cut 1 to 1-1/2 inches tall so one doesn't have to mow the lawn so often.

3. If you kill the weeds in the lawn, the grass will grow to fill in the spaces.

4. The rotary lawn mower needs no preventive maintenance ...ever.

5. When the grass looks sick, feed it. When the grass turns brown, feed it.

6. If the pesticide doesn't work, use more of it.

7. Put lime on the lawn every year.

8. In the summer, water the lawn every day to keep it green (if you don't have water restrictions).

We have come to the startling conclusion that over half of the homeowners are unhappy with the condition of their lawn!

They are feeling unsuccessful and frustrated about their lawns. But, the important fact is that most of them are really trying to have an attractive lawn. They are looking for help and are willing to try new things.

JEFF: In our opinion, the lawn care industry has a major problem that it must address. Any industry with over 50% customer dissatisfaction must, collectively, take a hard look at the causes. American homeowners are not able to blame any single company for their problems. A healthy attractive lawn occurs when all the tools and products are used together properly.

We think that's the problem...no individual company or organization takes responsibility for helping the homeowner put it all together. If the lawn care industry doesn't decide to do something about the problem, we believe it is going to be facing a backlash that will have serious economic repercussions in the next decade. Only 1 out of 10 comments we heard about lawn services were positive. We are finding more and more homeowners very open to suggestions for how to reduce the size of their lawn using ground covers or even wildflowers.

JIM: You say that the lawn care industry should take a hard look at the causes of dissatisfaction. What do you see as the causes?

JEFF: We believe that one of the major causes of homeowner dissatisfaction with the condition of their lawn is that the green industry offers products and focuses their marketing on solving the consumer's PERCEIVED problems rather than giving them more help to understand and solve the REAL problems of American lawns.

We have discovered that because the great majority of homeowners don't know much about plants and how they grow, the problems they reported to us were just symptoms of the real problems that existed. The perceived problems were: too many weeds; insect damage unable to eliminate; diseases which they seldom could identify; and, generally poor appearance which more fertilizer, more water, and more lime were not solving. They bought industry products as "solutions" and proceeded to intensify the very problems they were trying to solve.

LIZ: By cutting their grass too closely and by not leaving the clippings, they have a weed infested turf growing in soil almost devoid of humus, earthworms, or any microbotic activity. Over-watering and over-fertilizing creates thatch and stresses plants throughout the growing season. It is

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no wonder they suffer insect pests and fungal disease. Stressed plants always do.

JIM: What do you identify as the real problems with lawns?

LIZ: We see four major real problems.

1. Soil is compacted. Over two-thirds of American lawns are growing on compacted soil.

2. Soil is almost dead. Over half of the lawns are being grown in soil with few earthworms, less than 1% humus, and with little microbiotic activity.

3. Grass is tired. Because of the stress caused by improper lawn care practices, most existing lawns lack vigor. The grass is usually more than 5 years old, which means it lacks the benefits of recent technological developments in improved grass seed varieties.

JEFF: The fourth is lawn care practices that are harmful. As we've said, most homeowners mow their grass too short, remove the clippings, over-fertilize, over-water, and never aerate or add organic material to the turf. Collectively, these practices effectively undermine the best efforts to build healthy turf. No wonder a majority of homeowners are unhappy with their lawns.

JIM: What do you recommend the turfgrass industry do to help solve the real problems you've identified?

JEFF: We suggest companies do the following:

1. Adopt advertising and marketing practices that better inform and remind the homeowner of proper lawn care practices with all products and services. The industry must collec-



Jeff & Liz Ball

tively agree to send and keep the same message before the homeowner.

2. Develop easier instructions for the homeowner. These instructions go beyond the label, which we understand is dictated by EPA rules and regulations. Terms like "water deeply," "spread as needed," "repeat if necessary," "use only dilute amount," and "takes some shade" all assume the reader knows something about plants. The majority do not.

3. Develop products, such as a reasonable costing residential power core-aerating machine, an easy way to spread organic material on the lawn, improved grass seed marketed specifically as low maintenance with simple instructions on overseeding, and sturdier sprinkler devices that are easier, more flexible, and more efficient for the home lawn.

4. Develop and implement an industry-wide plan that will better educate the majority of the lawn and garden retailers to stress good lawn management practices to the consumer along with selling them solutions to immediate problems.

Whether justifiably or not, the lawn

care industry is being attacked in the media. It is being blamed for polluting the water supply, degrading the environment and poisoning people, dogs, birds, and earthworms.

All this, and if over 50% of lawn care product customers are still dissatisfied with their lawns, it seems to be time for the whole industry to evaluate the long-term impact of this situation on its future economic viability.

We suggest that responding to the real, underlying problems in residential lawn care with new products and marketing strategies is necessary. There is a great deal of money to be made with this focus.

LIZ: Remember, we make our living in this industry, too. We're not trying to be over critical of the industry, but rather to offer some thought and ideas on how to better serve and help the majority of American homeowners ...the yardeners.

JIM: One last, sort-of loaded question. You've worked with and used the information from The Lawn Institute. What role do you see it playing in this new industry focus on the real problems?

JEFF: Eliot Roberts and The Lawn Institute having been trying to focus on the real problems since we've known them. Quite honestly, it seems you haven't had enough industry support to really make an impact on a large number of consumers. The agronomic information is good and sound from The Lawn Institute, but you need more help from more of the industry to carry the message to the consumer that you have information that can help them with the real problems in managing their lawns. We hope you get the interest and help you need. Good luck. ❖

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH GARDEN COMMUNICATORS

BY ROBERT C. LAGASSE
*Executive Director
Garden Writers
Association of America*

Many of us in the turfgrass industry have the opportunity to communicate with the press from time to time. The following are excerpts from a presentation made by Bob LaGasse during the recent annual meeting of the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) in Washington, DC.



Garden communicators come in all shapes and sizes. According to surveys of our membership, the most common point of origin for garden writers was from the horticultural field where nurserymen, agronomists, landscape designers, growers, and others learned about plants and became writers later. And of course, there are also ample supplies of journalists who became interested in horticulture, lawn & garden product manufacturers turned writers, educators, extension specialists, and even just plain garden enthusiasts who took up the calling of writing on the topic.

WHAT DO SUCH PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?

First is a love of gardening. This is combined with a deep appreciation and concern for nature and our environment and how people fit into that environment. Like most writers, garden communicators have limited resources. The profession is not known for its high-paying jobs. But perhaps the most important commonality among garden communicators is that they are people who influence the lives of other people through their writing. They all have some form of following. Just ask nurseries what happens when Jack Eden or Patti Hagen or other GWAA members tell the public to do something in their gardens.

WHAT FUNCTIONS DO GARDEN COMMUNICATORS FULFILL?

Gardening has been reported as the #1 leisure activity in the U.S. Literally billions of dollars and countless hours are spent by the American public on this endeavor. If you think about it, this is an interesting situation, considering most of the public is comprised of doctors, lawyers, secretaries, teachers, firemen, and droves of other people who have little or no horticultural training. Everyone is a potential gardener. Where do these people get their instructions? How do they know what to do, when to do it with what, and why? It is often from garden communicators.

Garden writers are the major link between the horticultural profession and the general public. They are the vehicle through which the high technology products and new procedures are translated into understandable information for the amateur and other gardeners. We assist people in understanding the design, installation, maintenance, and appreciation of gardens. Garden writers run the gamut from "How to" educators to philosophers on our environment. We have our share of traditionalists who instruct people on the time-honored practices and standards, and we have our share of iconoclastic advocates who teach new ideas and inspire different thinking among the public. With such a diversity of people and talents, how can you establish useful communications with garden writers?

DIVERSITY IS THE KEY.

One message alone is not likely to strike home with all garden writers. So, you must target your communications

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to meet a variety of needs. Your first objective should be to define the purpose of your communications program. Focus on the needs of the garden writer and his/her audience and mold your message to meet that need. In order to accomplish this task, you have to get to know as many writers as possible and understand their interests for their audiences.

Have you ever considered what role plant seeds play, or could play, in what I call the four basic phases of gardening...design, installation, maintenance, and appreciation? What message do you have to convey to garden communicators who have an interest in each of these phases? How are you assuring that your products are being considered throughout the growing season? What procedures do you use to announce new products? What is the public interest story in new products? How do new products impact each of the four phases of gardening?

Many reports on consumer preferences I have seen indicate amateur gardeners have limited time to spend in gardens but still want instant gratification, great color, low maintenance, and high quality. I wish I had a penny for every peat pot with nursery stock that got planted in the consumer's garden and landscape each spring. Can consumers incorporate seed planting with their planting of nursery stock to save time and space, conserve maintenance, stagger growing and blooming times, and extend the color and beauty of their gardens and landscape? OF COURSE...if they know how.

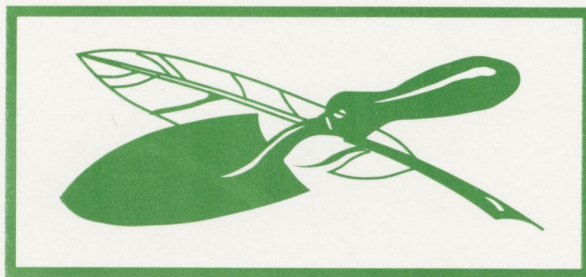
USE GARDEN WRITERS AS A RESOURCE.

Do you know why consumers don't buy more seed, or in many cases, better quality seed? What products will be in high demand next season? What products or product mixes will encourage consumers next season? What more can you do to meet consumer needs and improve sales?

Have you ever ask garden writers what they think about these questions and problems? If you can't afford to survey millions of consumers, why not ask the people who are closest to the public...the people the public depends upon for their inspiration and information? The last figure I heard on the number of consumers influenced by garden writers was 80 million people. That is a resource you should be using.

WHO WRITES YOUR STORIES?

Use garden writers to interest other garden writers. Plan your communications program for what you want to accomplish in each of the four phases of gardening. Then



extend your communications throughout the season. Solicit help from professionals who can present your message in a proper way...a straight-forward sales pitch or techno-data-dump is not generally well received. Give your message some character and human interest. Finally, follow-up on placements. A one-shot mes-

sage seldom sells and almost never educates. Repetition is necessary.

In today's fast-paced world of constant information overload, working with garden writers isn't so much a question of marketing as it is an opportunity for mutual education. Keep in mind that not everyone...even garden writers...knows your products and their uses as well as you do. Make the message both informative and interesting.

WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

The GWAA is a resource base through which you can build a viable communications program. Over 1400 garden writers are available who can assist you with surveys, focus groups, and other research programs. Our Quill & Trowel Newsletter is published bimonthly and can help spread information on new products, people, policy changes, and other newsworthy issues. Need mailing labels to circulate information to communicators? Give me a call. Trying to locate talented writers? Got that, too. Direct mail programs are great, but they are transient. If you want to have your message available to garden writers when they need it, the GWAA is developing a Garden Products Reference Guide for its members. Indexed listings of product information will stay on garden writers desks all year long.

My purpose is not to recruit you into GWAA, although all interested parties are welcome. What I hope I have conveyed is that there are opportunities for the seed industry to benefit from building better relationships with garden communicators. ❖

**For more information write:
GWAA, 10210 Leatherleaf Ct., Manassas, VA 22111
Tel: (703) 257-1032 FAX (703) 257-0213.**

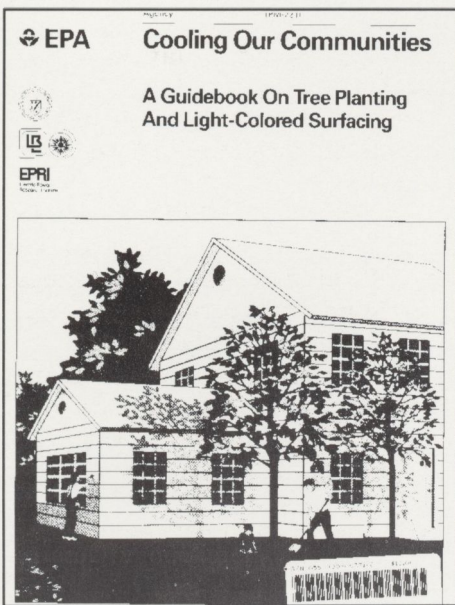
SPECIAL NOTE: The Lawn Institute plans to be a part of the GWAA's new Garden Products Reference Guide, scheduled for distribution to the membership in early December. As the recognized best source for information on turfgrasses, lawns, and sports turf, The Lawn Institute will have an extensive listing of resource topics, publications, and other services available to assist garden communicators.

** The Lawn Institute is a member of the Garden Writers Association of America.*

The Lawn Institute Digest

EPA'S COOLING OUR COMMUNITIES: A GUIDEBOOK ON TREEPLANTING & LIGHT-COLORED SURFACING

YOU BETTER READ THIS!



If you haven't read this GPO Document #055-000-00371-8, we think you should...or at least pages 53-63 and pages 157-193.

Why? The authors reach some conclusions and make recommendations suggesting reduced use of turfgrass in our urban areas...due to a phenomenon identified as the "heat island effect."

"It is clear...that trees can be added to most urban landscapes without increasing water use--if trees, or some combination of trees, shrubs, and groundcover, replace lawn area. If total vegetated area remains constant, landscape water requirements can decrease rapidly as trees replace lawns." THIS IS NOT JUST A GUIDEBOOK FOR PLANTING TREES. As Richard D. Morgenstern, Acting As-

sistant Administrator, states in his introduction, "This book is a practical guide that represents the current state of knowledge on potential environmental and economic benefits of strategic landscaping and altering surface colors in our communities. The guidebook...focuses on actions by citizens and communities that can be undertaken to improve the quality of our homes and towns in cost-effective ways."

Who wrote this guidebook? It was a joint effort of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. One of the principle concerns of the turfgrass industry with the authorship and cited references is the fact that no one with appropriate training, credentials, or expertise in the area of turfgrass science was involved in the preparation, editing, or peer review of the turfgrass materials and recommendations.

There are two other specific concerns with the content of this guidebook. The use of only "observational findings" and estimate modeling, coupled with the acknowledged lack of scientifically based tree and shrub water usage, prevent any responsible recommendation that one should "Replace lawns with trees where possible." Finally, the authors use an outdated philosophy of Xeriscape in making several turf-related recommendations. In 1991, the National Xeriscape Council established a position favoring "practical turf areas," in recognition of turfgrass as an integral part of the landscape.

What's the big concern? It's just another government publication, isn't it? "Yes...but know who its audiences are and put it into perspective on the drought problems, water restrictions, and ordinances being imposed by a growing number of communities nationwide. "We designed the COOLING OUR COMMUNITIES with several audiences in mind," including: elected officials and other policymakers; foresters, landscapers, architects, and urban planners; utilities; commer-

cial interests; citizen's and community groups; and professional schools and programs.

What support documents may be in the elected official or policymaker's briefcase when determining water regulations or ordinances in your community or area? COOLING OUR COMMUNITIES could be one of them, and he or she won't be lobbying for lawns and turfgrass! It's important to be aware and be knowledgeable of documents and resources lawmakers may be using for policy formulation and recommendations.

Several allied turfgrass organizations, including The Lawn Institute, are trying to arrange a meeting with the appropriate people at EPA to discuss the turfgrass industry's concerns regarding this "Guidebook." The initial request was made through a letter dated May 28, 1992 from Doug Fender, Executive Director, American Sod Producers Association. At this writing, no meeting date has been set. If you read the document and agree with the concerns expressed, write Mr. Morgenstern, EPA, Office of Policy Analysis, Climate Change Division, 401 M Street, SW (PM-221), Washington, DC 20460. You could also take the time to call or write your Congressman or Senators expressing the need for the EPA to meet with representatives of the turfgrass industry to review several of the conclusions and recommendations made by the authors of this publication.

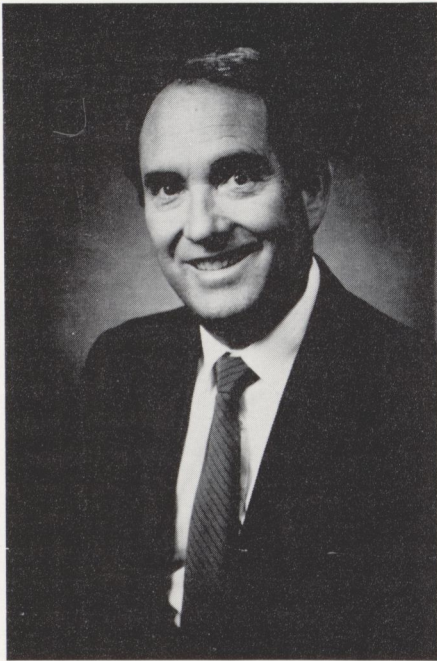
What else can you do as a concerned member of the turfgrass industry? Food for thought can be found in The Lawn Institute Digest's companion article, "Water Restrictions - Becoming Part of the Ordinance Making Process," the Reno/Sparks, Nevada Story. ❖

To obtain a copy of COOLING OUR COMMUNITIES, send \$13.00 check or money order to:

GPO Document # 055-000-00371-8
Superintendent of Documents
P.O. Box 371954
Pittsburgh, PA 15220-7954
ATTN: New Orders

THE RENO/SPARKS, NEVADA STORY

WATER RESTRICTION—BECOMING PART OF THE ORDINANCE MAKING PROCESS



HARRY G. FAHNESTOCK

BACKGROUND

In northern Nevada, the driving force for lawn watering restrictions and ordinances has been Mother Nature...with the region experiencing its sixth year of drought. Restrictions are generally emergency measures that are set in place by a trigger mechanism such as storage capacity, river flow, etc. Once the condition is restored to the pre-trigger conditions, then the emergency measures are supposed to be lifted. Some of the proposed restrictions were:

- No planting of lawns between June 1 and October 1.
- Twice a week watering of lawns with daytime restrictions
- Once a week watering of lawns with daytime restrictions.

- No watering at all during some months.

- No planting of lawns during drought.

- Plant a lawn anytime during the year, but only water once a week.

Ordinances are relatively easy for bureaucrats to adopt, but they are very difficult for the public to change. An ordinance is a jurisdictional command that is put in place

by political process and remains until amended or repealed. Some of the proposed ordinances for the Reno/Sparks area included:

- Xeriscape, calling for reduced and non-turf areas.

- Specified percentages of turf areas allowed, such as,

- No more than 5% of the landscape in a commercial installation.

- No more than 10% turf allowed in a residential installation.

- No Kentucky bluegrass permitted because of its high water use.

This is taken from a presentation given at the American Sod Producers Midwinter Conference in February, 1992 by Harry G. Fahnestock, owner of Western Turf and president of the Nevada Landscape Association. The accomplishment of the turfgrass and landscape industry in the Reno/Sparks area is a classic example of what can be done through good organization when faced with proposed restrictions and/or ordinances that negatively impact your business and industry. If your community or area doesn't presently have conditions that might be cause for regulation, now is the best time to educate policy makers, customers, and the public about the benefits of turfgrass and the true facts about water consumption and conservation. The Lawn Institute stands ready to assist any group or organization with these efforts. Take this article to your next association meeting and discuss the merits of implementing a program and strategy for your area.

Our season begins around May 1 and runs into November. Faced with the prospects of these restrictions and ordinance proposals, the industry negotiated with the Regional Water Board. We reached agreement to allow twice-a-week watering during high demand periods and once-a-week watering during cool, low demand months. Additionally, in the spirit of "doing our part" to save water, we agreed to a moratorium on lawn planting from July 1 through August 15 with the provision that when a new lawn was

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WATER RESTRICTION

Continued

planted, it could be irrigated without restriction for a 6-week establishment period.

In the name of "public perception," the industry forfeited seven weeks of our business to show the community we were doing our part to save water. Westpac, the for-profit supplier of our water, thought it would be unfair to ask the community to save water while we were still planting lawns. Our effort was estimated to save 62 acre feet of water. Westpac supplies 63,000 acre feet annually, and the goal was to save a total of 6,000 acre feet; with 4500 of the total coming from the turf industry. This was the only industry named in the conservation plan to cut back!

An interesting side-note involves an annual 5-day August celebration called "Hot August Nights." During this 5-day event, we conservatively estimated the increased demand for water to serve just the out-of-town visitors to be 65 acre feet...3 acre feet more than what we were told to save by virtually shutting down our businesses for 7 weeks!

OTHER INFLUENCES THAT CAN BRING REGULATION

Drought is not the only factor that can bring regulations that have a negative impact on the turfgrass industry.

The use of pesticides and fertilizers has become a national issue over concerns about run-off, water quality, and ground water contamination. At a recent public hearing where a major development was being reviewed, one of the issues raised against the project was that adjacent streams, creeks, and a lake might be contaminated from run-off and leaching of chemicals from a golf course within the planned development. Although the project was denied for other reasons, this was an

emotional issue and gave major support to the opposition.

Perhaps the greatest incentive for regulation in the absence of drought...and a real paradox...is growth. We all rely on growth. But growth takes water. The indoor use of water is compulsory, while outdoor use is seen as an embellishment and therefore expendable. We're going to find ourselves competing with the hand that feeds us to maintain our fair share of our lifeblood...water. Many of the fastest growing regions in the country are also those where the adequacy of current water supplies to meet future demands is being studied and questioned. If less water is to be allocated to more people, then reductions in usage must be made. Who and what do you suppose policymakers will look at first?

ORGANIZE

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a strategy for educating the public and the policy makers about the benefits of turfgrass and the true facts about water consumption. It is much easier to do these things before the industry is "under the gun" to protect itself from a new set of regulations.

If you don't have one, form a turfgrass or green industry association and enlist all phases of the industry. You can anticipate a "so what" and "it doesn't affect me" attitude at first. But when contractors realize that restriction may create more competition, when maintenance people realize there may be fewer lawns to care for, and when architects and planners realize that someone else is going to tell them what to do, the domino effect will be understood.

The turfgrass industry must take the lead. We are the first to be affected and we have the most to lose. If you are passive and wait for someone else to carry the banner, they will...the bureaucrats and policy makers.

GATHER INFORMATION

No matter the point of view on an issue, good information is critical when debating the need for added regulation. With water issues, find the answers to the following questions.

- Where does your water come from?
- Is it surface or ground water?
- What is the storage capacity?
- Who owns and operates the delivery system?
- How old is the delivery system?
- How much is held in reserve for drought & other emergencies?
- How often does your area experience drought?
- How much water does the community use monthly & annually per capita? Per household? Total?
- What are the usage and rates for residential? Commercial? Industrial? Agriculture?
- What are the projections for short and long-term growth?
- What is the ability of the community to meet growth?

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Talk to your state and local water engineers, the soil conservation service, climatologists, and cooperative extension agents in gathering this information.

What do you know about your community and local green industry? In our area, there is a population of 257,000 of which 137,000 live in Reno and 56,000 in Sparks. There are 715 "green" entities employing an estimated 2,584 people. This represents an annual payroll of \$43 million, gross sales estimated in excess of \$122 million, workmen's compensation premiums of \$2.8 million, and sales tax revenues of \$8.5 million.

Using this type of information as a comparison can do some good and give policy makers, the media, and the public "an eye opening" perspective. In our case, we estimated the amount of sod in the target area of the regulation to be about 150 acres...or the approximate area of a local 27 hole golf course. And then we asked, "Would you shut down the golf course if it employed that many people and had such a profound economic impact on the community?" Of course not.

Who are the policy makers in your community and more importantly, who are the staff people that report to them? Are they knowledgeable? What is their background and expertise? Have they ever been in business? What are their views on growth and the ability of the community to serve future demands? What are their feelings about landscaping and its importance to the environment? Where do they live? Do they have lawns?

What do you know about your media? Who covers stories on the industry? What are their views? Do they have information about the positive aspects and impact of turfgrass on the landscape and environment?

DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND EDUCATE

You have a lot to gain by working with and educating your policy makers, their staffs, and the media. If you

provide them with good information from the beginning, they will more likely adopt measures that are good for the community and the industry. But remember that your strategy and plan must be "offensive," not "defensive."

Show that most new lawns are installed with conservation in mind, citing new turfgrass varieties with lower water use, proper soil preparation, new technology in irrigation, etc. Emphasize that conservation efforts should be directed to the management of water in all areas, if they are serious about achieving real goals in the reduction of water used.

Talk about proper design, preparation, installation, and maintenance of a water efficient landscape. Discuss and propose indoor conservation measures. Suggest incentives for retrofitting faucets, showerheads and toilets with low-flow fixtures. Though estimates vary, if all homes were retrofitted, the saving would be thousands of acre feet annually and a saving of millions of dollars in reduced treatment costs.

Providing technical seminars and workshops for the policy makers, their staffs, and the media, was one of the most important things we did. We invited every person that remotely had anything to do with water policy, planning, or management. Attendees included mayors, council people, commissioners, district attorneys, planners, architects, public works people, parks & recreation personnel, and the media. We had turfgrass experts covering the areas of our industry that seemed to be the most misunderstood. Our speakers discussed the basic facts and benefits of turfgrass, the pros & cons of Xeriscape, water consumption of trees & shrubs, and the importance of proper irrigation, no matter what you plant. The success of this program exceeded our expectations and we're still getting positive feedback from attendees. We opened a lot of eyes and a lot of minds. Follow up these sessions with letters and phone calls for

views and opinions.

Attend all meetings and functions where the industry may be a topic for discussion. Ask to be included in the political process with advisory groups, planning committees, etc. Show your group's interest in all aspects of water conservation.

Ask the media to help educate the public and get them involved. Develop ads, submit editorials, write customer newsletters, work with extensions in providing programs for the schools, garden groups, homeowner associations, etc.

ORGANIZATION AND HARD WORK CAN BRING SUCCESS

Initially, the ordinance in Sparks was to be designed as a Xeriscape ordinance, but evolved into one which encourages the use of resource-efficient principles, and the development of a balanced landscape. Perhaps the most important concept that came out of the evolution of the ordinance was that no single plant or component of an irrigation system can save water. Man, not plants or mechanical apparatuses, wastes water. Policy makers came to the realization that until we are able to relay that message to the public and properly educate people, there will be no water savings. The final wording identified it as a "Resource-Efficient" landscaping ordinance. One of the key components of the purpose statement was to encourage, not discourage, the installation of landscaping in order to protect and enhance the environment. Some of the specifics in the final version of the ordinance included limiting turf to no more than 80% of the total landscaped area. The 80% limitation was intended as a design component, and not necessarily to restrict the use of any type of plant in a landscape design. Additionally, a "drought-tolerant" plant list was not developed since most plants can be successfully incorporated into any landscape design and will adapt to any water regimen. It was decided to leave the choice

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WATER RESTRICTION

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of plants open-ended, and place emphasis on the water-delivery system as the source of water savings.

Undoubtedly, there will be other environmental policy proposals that will impact the turfgrass industry adversely. But we feel very good about the fact that education with sound agronomic information brought a 180-degree turnaround from what was originally being discussed and proposed for the ordinance.

TURFGRASS INDUSTRY MUST LEAD

Collectively, our industry must seize the opportunity and take the offensive in educating policy makers, the media, and the public in water conservation policies even before they become a major local issue. We must demonstrate our industry's willingness to take the lead in conservation and water efficiency. We must provide good information and show proof that we don't have to tear out our lawns to accomplish conservation. One of our policy makers commented, "The most important thing I learned is that plants

don't waste water, people do."

There is a quality of life issue here as well. As we convert more and more land to urban/suburban development with added concrete and asphalt, we diminish our vegetation and landscape areas. More people and more businesses take more water. If the water supply is not adequate to meet the growth demands without imposing restrictions or ordinances, then development should be impeded. Our homes and particularly our landscapes are the only places that we can create an environment in which we spend the majority of our non-working hours. I personally don't want anyone telling me what I can or cannot do in that private zone within reason. This is a freedom issue that effects our quality of life. At the same time, we must recognize that abusive waste of our most precious resource...water...must stop.

The turfgrass industry needs to lay down its competitive axes and form alliances to work together to educate policy makers and the public on the benefits of turfgrass and the landscape in water management and conservation. Our biggest competitor in the marketplace may be our own governments! ❖

ASA—THE FIRST 40 YEARS

The Atlantic Seedmen's Association has just published "ASA-The First 40 Years," an 80-page history of the association. Executive Director John E. Baylor notes that the book includes over 80 photos and tells the story of the ASA's founders, year-by-year challenges faced by the seedsmen of the Mid-Atlantic and North-eastern regions, and industry issues like lawn seed labeling.

"ASA members have played active roles in all areas of the industry, but are most closely identified with the lawn seed industry," he says. Copies of "ASA-The First 40 Years" are \$14 each (including postage and handling), and can be ordered from ASA, Attention: John E. Baylor, 298 E. McCormack Ave., State College, PA 16801. Checks should be made out to The Atlantic Seedmen's Association.

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