

# Reduce Your Reliance On Pesticides

**B**efore the next growing season begins and you get overwhelmed with work, take a little time and develop a strategy to reduce your reliance on pesticides. In addition to a possible savings of money, think about the positive effect on the environment. Let's face it, daily, you work with plants, soil and people. I consider you to be the ultimate environmentalist. Why not enhance your image and show your peers and customers that you practice environmental stewardship and reduce the amount of pesticides you apply.

The majority of turfgrass managers are professional, conscientious people consumed by many tasks. Pest management is only a small component of the turfgrass system. When pesticides are applied properly (for the correct pest, at the right rate and time) the manufacturers claim they are safe and will control the pest. However, there are people overusing, misusing and abusing pesticides. This enhances the controversy surrounding pesticide use.

There are strong arguments for and against changing your current pest management practices to lessen the amount of pesticides ending up in your body, other living organisms, the soil, water and air. Do not look at the challenge of reducing pesticide use as a risk to the turf quality or your job. All turfgrass managers growing and maintaining turf in all types of settings can attempt to decrease the amount of pesticides they apply.

The key to reducing your reliance on pesticides is an open mind and willingness to learn. The winter is an excellent time to plan and gather turf, pest and management information. Seek out every possible practice that will promote a healthy turfgrass plant. The best sources for this information are Cornell Cooperative Extension, trade magazines and educational seminars and confer-

ences such as those sponsored by Cornell University or the New York State Turfgrass Association.

Start with a simple plan. Think of all the methods you can implement to promote dense, healthy turf and thus reduce your reliance on pesticides; for example: cultivation, over seeding, fertilization, etc. Critically review your overall program. Obviously, you are implementing many cultural practices already. Determine methods to ascertain if they are working. Find new options to add, delete, or improve your cultural and fertility regime.

Establish techniques to document the real needs of the turf. Be prepared to take soil samples and monitor the turf on a regular basis. Researchers at Cornell have developed simple guidelines to monitor turfgrass pests.

Solve pest problems early before they spread into large areas. Spot treat only where the pest occurs. This will help reduce the amount of pesticides applied.

For every pest management action, document what was done, where, how much, cost of product, and on what date. Note the target pest(s) and the specific reason for action. Knowledge about labor hours involved in mixing and spraying will be particularly useful in cost/benefit analysis of the pest management strategies and techniques. This information is necessary to judge the efficacy and cost of any management action employed.

Keeping good records each year will enable you to evaluate the effectiveness of new and existing turfgrass management methods once the season is over. In addition, the records will help point out important trends in pesticide use each year. For example, after a new program has been in place for several seasons, has there been a reduction in the total amount applied? Comparing annual information will also point out recurrent pest trends and successful management strategies.

Document your efforts and let people know what you are doing. This is an excellent way to show people turfgrass managers are true stewards of the environment.

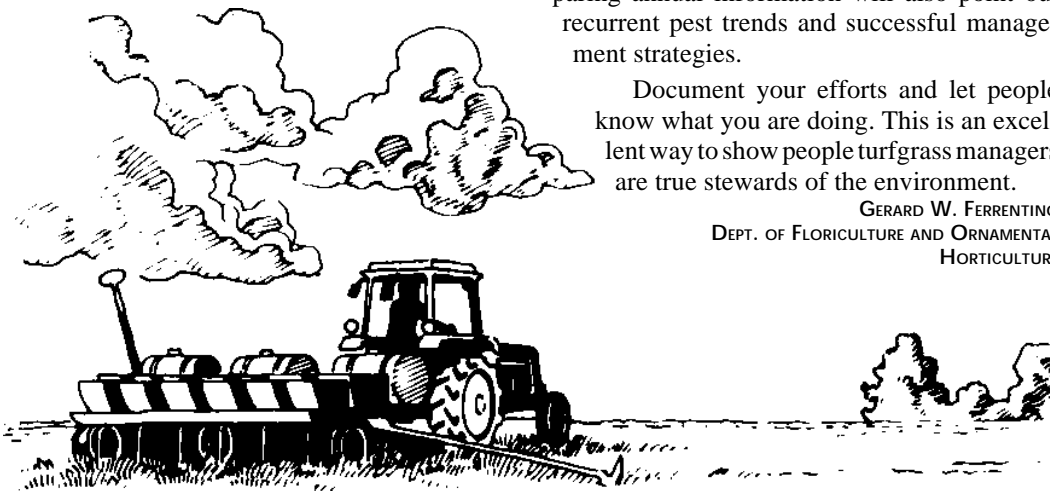
GERARD W. FERRENTINO  
DEPT. OF FLORICULTURE AND ORNAMENTAL  
HORTICULTURE



## IPM Corner

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# 15