Growth in golf industry breathes life into ponds

BY PETER BLAIS

The growth of golf has breathed new life into aeration companies with products designed to keep ponds clear and odor free. "Although we have tremendous experience with water treatment, we're fairly new to the golf market," said Daniel Durda, co-founder and president of Aeration Industries International, Inc. "But we're approaching the golfwater market this year with an aggressive marketing and advertising program. "We've been selling aerators to golf courses for several years in response to the industry's need for a proven, effective water restoration technology. We're projecting it to be a significant portion of our domestic business in 1990. Aeration Industries, the largest manufacturer of aspirator aerators in the world, markets a patented, surface-mounted aerator that injects (aspirates) air under the water's surface, creating a horizontal circulation throughout the pond. It is a relatively new alternative to vertical aerators (fountains) and chemicals, the traditional methods of treating ponds at golf courses. "We got into the golf market in 1980," said Chuck Barebo, president of Barebo, Inc. (Otterbine trademark), one of the leading manufacturers of vertical aerators. "Now it represents 30 to 35 percent of our business." The purpose of an aerator is to add oxygen and reduce the growth of algae that can cloud relatively stagnant water. In addition to being an eyesore, an algae-clogged pond often has an offensive smell. And when used for irrigation, the algae-containing water can clog filters, valves and screens, fouling sprinkler heads and choking irrigation lines. Algae-filled irrigation water can adversely affect turf growth before eventually washing back into ponds where the algae can grow again. Uncontrolled water-quality problems translate into expensive maintenance headaches. Superintendents often resort to copper sulfate to treat stagnant water. Besides the expense, the heavy metal eventually sinks to the bottom, creating a hazardous environment that promotes the growth of beneficial algae and other micro-organisms whose by-products are water, carbon dioxide and oxygen instead of toxic chemicals present in poorly circulated ponds. Lack of proper circulation encourages adverse algae growth that results in unsightly, floating mats of organic trash. At a speed of up to 60 tons an hour. At the same time, they screen, pulverize, and level the ground, leaving you with a perfect seedbed. Manufacturers tout aerators as a natural alternative to such chemical treatment. The oxygen energizes zooplankton that feeds on the algae. The circulation created by an aerator's flow pattern breaks up stagnant water and prevents algae from growing back. Whether aeration or circulation is more important is one of the selling points used by manufacturers of horizontal flow and vertical flow aerators. "Aeration and circulation are both vital to a pond's total water quality management," said Durda in support of Aeration Industries International's horizontal flow aerator. "The algae already produces a lot of oxygen. Our product aerates and, equally important, circulates water. This creates an environment that sustains the growth of beneficial algae and other micro-organisms whose by-products are water, carbon dioxide and oxygen instead of toxic chemicals present in poorly circulated ponds. Lack of proper circulation encourages adverse algae growth that results in unsightly, floating mats of organic trash..."
pond aeration equipment companies

Steve Brown, president of Airlake Aeration, Inc., sees a need for both, often in conjunction with one another.

"Put a 2-horsepower fountain in a three-acre pond, and you don't have a chance. But add another piece of equipment to get the water circulating and it will work," said Brown, who was director of golf division sales for Aeration Industries International before opening his own firm a year ago.

The rule-of-thumb for aerators is 2 h.p. per surface acre of water. A perfectly round one-acre pond may get by with a 2 h.p. machine.

An irregular-shaped, one-acre pond with many nooks and crannies may require two aeration devices, or more if it contains effluent water, an increasingly important source of golf course irrigation water.

"Anyone using effluent water has a big nutrient load coming in. If it just sits there, it will grow the wrong types of algae." — Steve Brown

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