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I'm now teaching DASR techniques to my four assistants! These four simple steps: Describe, Acknowledge, Specify and Reaffirm are definitely a more appropriate, productive way to give negative feedback.

It was great talking with other supers about member programming/family programming. I was able to come back with a bunch of new ideas for our membership director.

Overall, this was the best educational event I've ever been to in my 15 years as a superintendent. The fact that Syngenta kept it completely free of product advertising was appreciated by all. The camaraderie between the selected superintendents was incredible. It was almost too good to be true!

Adam Bagwell
MPS, CGCS
Crane Creek Country Club
Boise, ID

Lessons learned

What have we learned from this and other tough winters?

"Mother Nature is always in charge, and sometimes we try to do everything right and wind up being wrong." Says Darin Beward, director, Mid-Atlantic Green Section, USGA from the Pennsylvania office. "When the weather goes against you, there isn't much you can do."

Jim Skorulski, senior agronomist with the USGA office in Massachusetts says. "Some portion of the NE region will experience some difficult winter weather and cold temperature injury on a fairly regular basis. This year's winter weather is more extreme or seems to be impacting a much wider portion of the region and country. There have been records broken for cold temperature and for snowfall totals in many areas, and winter seems to be holding on hard." He adds. "Mother Nature is boss. She flexed some muscle to let us know that."

"Learn that what we do throughout the year will have an impact on what happens when the turf is dormant," says Carmen Magro, CGCS, MBA, professional agronomist and vice president, business development for Stevens Water Monitoring Services. "The turf system's performance level is highly dependent on what we do throughout the year, from year to year. It is why tournament courses begin to prepare for major tournaments years in advance."

Magro adds, "We can only achieve great success by learning to manage all the things that are manageable to the best of our ability...these include soil management, irrigation management and nutritional management in no particular order, but of equal importance."

As soon as the grass can be vented or allowed to be exposed to sun and air, do it, Magro says. Do not aerify the turf too soon. Gradually, over a period of 7-10 days of sun and warmth exposure, mow off the dead material and begin your nutritional and IPM management program.

"Focus on the fundamental needs of the turf...stimulate growth down through the roots, manage the soil/moisture relationships, air out the turf any way possible to get the gas exchange moving well," he says. "Only in the case where there are active fungi growing and thriving would I make a fungicide application my first priority."

"Do not be over aggressive..."
BALLS BOUNCE
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DISEASE MANAGEMENT

“Once it [the grass] gets going, there will be no stopping it... If the turf survived the ice/snow damage in the North, then it will green up perfectly if we allow it to transition properly. If we are delayed in the south by extended cooler temperatures, then the cool season grasses (or painted warm season turf) will hang around a little longer than usual, but be assured that once the soils begin to warm ever so slightly, the deep green turf will be on us quickly.”

— Carmen Magro, CGCS, MBA, Stevens Water Monitoring Services

with maintenance practices when the grass isn’t growing, Bevard says. Also, monitor the weather and grass closely. “It may be possible to skip fungicide applications to control a disease such as Microdochium patch if, for example, the weather is going to turn dry, warm and sunny,” Bevard says. “The disease will no longer be active under these conditions.”

If you find out that you have experienced winterkill in certain areas, you’ll need to determine your next course of action.

There are a number of factors to take into consideration. Depending on the size and location of the areas you have the option of seeding or sodding.

If seeding you need to decide what seed to use. Will the seed that matches the primary stand in the affected areas germinate in time to be effective?

If not, what can you use that will establish itself quick enough but not contaminate your stand? What kind of combination can you use that will provide maximum results? What can be done to speed up the germination process?

If any kind of pre- or post-emergent weed control is needed, how do you time it with seeding for optimum control and seed establishment? How do you need to adjust your fertility program?

Keep in mind that the seedlings will not develop a good root system for some time so low rates of fertilizer applied more frequently will be more effective. You will
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also need to water the seeded areas more frequently until the plants become established. Mow as soon as the first seedlings reach the mowing height for the area.

To encourage the seedlings to spread mow early and frequently. If hot and humid weather is in the forecast, you may need to apply a fungicide to prevent damping off, Pythium, and/or brown patch.

Last, but certainly not least, manage moisture and salts together on a regular basis. "Monitoring those is simple with today's technology," Magro says. "Monitoring will prevent leaching of nutrients from the turf, allow for the most air exchange to take place, allow for the most extensive rooting to take place and simply help to setup the turf to withstand this year's stress and future stresses yet to be encountered."

Steve Trusty is a Council Bluffs, Iowa, based writer and frequent GCI contributor.

When turf doesn't have any snow cover desiccation can be a major problem. It can thin the turf by affecting some of the plants or wipe out an area by drying out all the crowns.

Capturing moisture from the soil before it evaporates, Hydretain® has the unique ability to provide turf, shrubs, flowers and trees with needed water between irrigation or rainfall cycles, keeping them healthy and vigorous. This not only saves your landscape from drought stress, but it also saves time and money especially in areas that are difficult to reach with daily irrigation.
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Irrigation Issues

The Little Things
Low-to-no-cost additions to make your system easier to operate.

Many times the little things make the difference in separating good from average or great from superior. Irrigation design and installation is no different. The little design and installation nuances that make the irrigation system better have always impressed me. When designing, renovating or installing a system, the following are some of the little things that will make your system easier to manage and troubleshoot.

Valve Box Covers
Today's irrigation systems have lots of valve boxes installed for isolation valves, drain valves, air release valves, quick couplers, wire splices, and electric valves. When you walk up to a group of valve boxes it would be nice to know what is housed in which box without having to pop them all open, especially if you're in a hurry due to a pipe or fitting break. Valve box covers are available in a variety of colors. Pick one each type of valve, keeping in mind what they'll look like in their installed environment and let your crew know what each color represents.

Identification Tags
Identifying cables and valves helps tremendously with troubleshooting. With the popularity of today's decoder systems, identifying where a communication cable is coming from and where it is going should be labeled at the time of installation. For example: "from," "to," "volts," "amps" and "output" at each junction should be put on the tag. Lastly, on conventional systems tagging the communication cable path and all electric valves with controller and zone number is also very helpful.

Ball Valves
Tired of getting wet when quick couplers are engaged or the key removed? Put a ball valve on the outlet between the key and the swivel using two brass nipples. Now you can keep the water flow off when engaging and disengaging the key, keeping you and your crew drier.

Wire Color
Wire comes in many different colors, for #12 and #14 AWG valve and sprinkler wires, decoder cable and some manufacturer's communication cables. Color coding also helps identify what color operates which communication path or what area of the golf course. For example, greens and tees purple control wires, fairway and rough orange control wires; path A communication blue and path B communication yellow.

However, the most beneficial part with different colors is distinguishing between old and new wires. When you install new irrigation the new wires should not be any of the same colors as the old wires, so you immediately know which wires you need to deal with.

Case Alignment
Ins and outs for greens have been popular for many years, and ins and outs on fairway edges are becoming more popular with today's systems. When you look down on these pairs of back-to-back sprinklers on greens and fairways it would be nice to know which is the in and which is the out. This is accomplished by placing the selector valve on the opposite side of the sprinkler nozzle. So the "in" sprinklers would have the selector switches on the back side of the sprinkler and the "out" sprinklers on the inside edge against the fairway cut of the green collar.

Gravel
Tired of opening a valve box and finding it full of water? Many times this is due to the way the valve box was installed and its inability to drain. If the box is installed on a gravel base, in most cases it will drain. Unfortunately, in most installations, the valve box is installed and gravel is simply poured into the box. This does not help in draining the box at all. Make sure that the box is installed on the gravel, 4 inches is preferred, for it to drain.

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Show plenty of patience and "TLC" with your turf because the last thing you want to do is put it under more stress.

BY JASON STAHL

COMING IN FOR THE KILL?

Winter’s severe cold and snow could heighten anthracnose’s impact in 2014, but so could spring weather conditions, experts debate. One thing is certain: stress – whether from dry-and-hot or wet-and-cold conditions – is the key.