

What Time of Day do you Irrigate your Fields?

by Don Savard CSFM*

What time of day is the best time of day to irrigate sports fields? I used to know the answer to that question. Now, the more I learn, the more I realize the less I know! Back when I was a kid and took care of a lawn for an old man who lived on my street (I think that he was in his mid 40's), he told me not to water his grass during the hot part of the day "because the sun will burn it up". I soon learned that watering during the day will not burn up the grass. In fact, an advantage to irrigating during the hot part of the day is the cooling effect the evaporating water has on the turf. (The rapidly evaporating water that does not reach the rootzone is also the disadvantage to irrigating during the hot part of the day). Later, I worked for a big national lawncare company that owned big white trucks. The standard "company line" when people asked when the best time to water was "never water at night because of the higher predisposition to fungus diseases". It even said so in our literature! After I left the big national lawncare company and started attending "outside" training classes taught by the various state cooperative extension service for pesticide recertification credits, I began to learn that there were other ideas as to when to water. Some of them even made a lot of sense.

Now, I have a confession to make. I have never used an automatic in-ground irrigation system. Never had them in any of the places that I have worked. Instead, I have only used above ground, portable systems. Miles of hoses, numerous stationary sprinklers, traveling sprinklers of all sizes and configurations. When I irrigate my fields, it REALLY takes a lot of time and effort. I found, that in order to make the entire circuit around my fields it took about 3 days. I irrigated from sun up until after sun down, and localized dry areas and areas of wilting turf received additional attention. My thinking became that of survival; that any water was better than no water and that the time of day the water was delivered was of less importance to me under these circumstances. Last year I was able to keep the playing surfaces from going dormant, while there was

an incidence of gray leafspot, it was generally confined to a couple of areas. The turf recovered nicely once favorable conditions returned in the fall.

So when is the best time to water? I'm not always sure. I went online, used Google and "polled" the experts. The answers fell into the categories

of: anytime (convenience doesn't hurt anything), 4AM-8AM and 9PM-9AM (good water pressure, less evaporation, less wet leaf time), 8AM-12PM (convenient). Nobody made the recommendation to water in the

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Calendar of Events

Sat. May 21 from 9am to noon - Snyder Research & Extension Farm
- Lawn Care Clinic

Topics include lawn mower races, how to mow less, weed control, selecting grass seed, over seeding demonstration, and fertilizing and lining large lawns. Reg. first 150 attendees. \$8. Call to register 908-713-8980

August 3rd - Rutgers University/SFMANJ unites to bring you Lawn/Landscape/Trade Show 8-9am & Equipment Demonstration Field Days. Adelphia Research Farm Reg 7:00am; Lawn & Landscape Section -Tours begin 9am; Lunch provided. Watch for flier

June 3rd - District I meeting held at Sussex Tech, Rt. 94, Sparta Topic: Softball Infield conversion. Be prepared for a hands-on experience. Sponsored by E&M Golf, Total Control Inc., Lofts/Pennington Seed Lunch provided \$15 members, \$25 non-members. Watch for flier. ♦

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afternoon or early evening (wind and evaporation are problems).

When and how do you irrigate? Please send me your thoughts and comments so that we might establish a

forum on this topic. donsavard@msn.com

* Don Savard is a Certified Sports Field Manager, Vice President of SFMANJ and Director of Athletic

Ann Waters of the (PCP) is taking a new position.

Ann Waters of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Pesticide Control Program of is taking on a new position as an Area Planner with the Office of Smart Growth, within the Department of Community Affairs effective April 18, 2005.

Counties came to rely upon Ann's knowledge and expertise in the application of the PCP regulations in her delivery of CORE curricula across the State. Her work with applicators made it a lot easier for them to want to comply with the regulations. She also reviewed the entire Pesticide Applicator Training Website that was constructed to meet the 2001 changes to the PCP regulations.

Ann was appointed a founding member of the Advisory Committee and has been instrumental in reviewing all major documents that we have released concerning NJDEP pesticide regulations. Ann provided leadership for School IPM to succeed in New Jersey. This included her work on 'The Model Plan for School IPM for New Jersey Schools. ♦

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