

## The Benefits of Wetting Agents and Effective Communication

**Quilchena Golf and Country Club**  
**Jason Hooper, superintendent**

**Richmond, British Columbia**

### Issue

Like many golf courses in the Pacific Northwest, Quilchena Golf and Country Club had major issues with wet conditions during the winter and spring. To improve this situation, the golf course maintenance department has been topdressing the fairways for over two decades. The accumulation of 6-7 inches of sand topdressing greatly improved playing conditions during the wetter months, but it also caused issues. During the drier summer months, the sandy root zone was contributing to severe drought stress in the *Poa annua* fairways. Fairways were often riddled with wet and dry areas as the maintenance staff struggled to effectively irrigate the course.

### Action

In 2014, Superintendent Jason Hooper decided to apply a wetting agent to the fairways to help irrigation water penetrate deeper into the root zone. This would improve the effectiveness of irrigation, enhance turf conditions and decrease overall water usage. The product was applied to the fairways four times during the summer.

To demonstrate the value and effectiveness of wetting agents, plant protectants and fertilizers, Mr. Hooper created an untreated check plot in a visible area of the putting green. This area receives none of the treatments applied to the golf course.

### Results

The wetting agent program was extremely successful. The wet and dry areas that once riddled the fairways had virtually disappeared. Water use declined by 10 percent during the first year of the program and it declined by another 10 percent the following year. The cost of the wetting agent was not low, but the results were well-received by the membership and worth the investment.

Mr. Hooper's untreated check plot has been an effective communication tool. There are many questions surrounding the use of various products on golf courses and it is important for golfers to understand the value of these products. Seeing the poor condition of the check plot helps golfers understand that wetting agents, plant protectants and fertilizers are not used simply for cosmetic purposes, they are an essential part of golf course maintenance.



*The accumulation of sand topdressing in the fairways at Quilchena contributed to drought stress during the warm and dry summers. Wetting agents helped water penetrate deeper into the root zone and improved turf conditions.*