



Water Tests... It's That Time Of Year

By Bub White, regional director, Mid-Continent Region

October 16, 2008

The fall season brings a slow down to golf course maintenance, and, after taking a little breather (hopefully), time to begin planning for the off season. This task always involves budget preparation and the winter project 'to do' list, but it also is a time to test soils and water.

A sampling of greens, tees, fairways and roughs is important every year so that fertility and soil amendment programs can be built and detailed to the needs of the individual areas on the course.

I want to express one concern we see as a staff, which is the ever-growing use of the saturated paste extract test (SPE) as a measure of nutrient needs in soils. Do not fall into this cycle of recommendations because nutrients cannot be accurately measured from SPE tests-only salts and boron. Below are links to two excellent articles that plainly explain the values and application of SPE soil tests. Basic soil chemical tests are still the basis with which to evaluate soil chemistry conditions and build fertility programs.

Irrigation water also should be tested now. The proper water test is called an 'irrigation suitability test'. This test provides the information needed to evaluate water treatment and/or soil amendment appropriate programs. The sample should be taken from an irrigation head, not dipped out of the reservoir. It also should be collected at the completion of the irrigation cycle the night before so that the sample is fresh and is exactly as the turf received the water.

Make some time to take full advantage of the conference season and catch up on friendships and the latest in golf course management.

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