Irrigation should be uniform

Uniformity of coverage is the key to effective irrigation, according to Rain Bird Irrigation’s Lynda Wightman. “No irrigation factor can be more efficiently utilized than uniformity of coverage,” she told the Sports Turf Managers Association recently.

Application rates also play a big role in irrigation efficiency, she notes. “If you don’t know your application rate in inches per hour, you can’t efficiently manage irrigation,” Wightman says.

Two considerations that should take high priority are soil type and water pressure. “Pressure is the biggest variable for an existing system,” she says. “Higher pressure can cause problems, but lower pressures can save money, increase pump life and reduce misting.”

She suggests conducting visual site inspections, checking out the installation height of heads and leaks.

“Cut back water until further reductions would stress the turf,” she stresses. “A wet field tears up much quicker than a dry field.”

“There’s no magic,” insists Neal Beeson of BC Turf. “It’s a lot of hard work and common sense—and you’d better maintain a sense of humor.”

Irrigation traps

Sally Prusia of Rain Bird lists seven traps in irrigation system design:
1) Do not stretch the dollars.
2) Know the area and type of coverage needed.
3) Choose the right equipment.
4) Specify available watering time.
5) Don’t forget the pump plant.
6) Take into account design considerations.
7) Insist on a quality installation.