

# point at the screen and click

## INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

### Water point

Remember, dirty water kills turf. Actually, it's not the water it is the bacteria-laden mud particles that does the damage. Warning signs are patches of green algae or "bloom" on the surface of your lake or reservoir. If this goes unchecked, it can consume all the available oxygen near the surface. Starved of its lifeline, the algae dies and sinks, repeating the process deeper in the water. If you apply chemicals to solve this problem, remember the water cannot be used for irrigation purposes for some time afterwards.

■ When was the last time you read the small print in your water abstraction licence? The NRA is tightening up and has imposed some severe penalties on clubs which have failed to observe the rules. "Licences only allow for watering at specific times during the day," warns Robin Hume of TIS Sandbach. For example, if you are licensed to abstract water for, say, 20 minutes each 24 hours, you cannot add another ten or 15 minutes just because there's a heatwave.

and rain. Compatible software enables the user to store daily and historical ET data, monitor and display current weather conditions and graphically display weather parameters.

Not only have the manufacturers loaded the systems with high-tech capabilities, but they've made them more accessible, too. Major irrigation manufacturers offer multiple communication options, including hard wire, telephone and radio, or a combination of all three. Wireless communication by radio transmitters appeals to designers who are retro-fitting a course because it eliminates the need to dig trenches for wire.

Another control option becoming more popular is the hand-held radio remote controller. Designed to give a greenkeeper more freedom, a hand-held unit can turn on and off individual stations, groups of stations, start flow management programmes and advance/pause irrigation functions from almost any location on the course.

A hand-held radio remote still must access the central computer, but field units also can be computerised to become independent controllers of a group of stations. Computerised field controllers have an added advantage in that they can help alleviate costly damage caused by broken pipes or a defective valve by measuring flow in gallons per minute and reacting to excessive flow. One new system we've seen has an alarm threshold and when the flow exceeds that threshold, the system assesses

each individual valve to detect the faulty one. When it has isolated the bad valve, it will shut it off (but the rest of the system will remain running), report the incident to the central computer and then notify the greenkeeper of what has occurred.

But no matter how much you fine-tune the controller or the original design, how you place your heads and how well they distribute the water will have the most impact on your system's effectiveness.

Uniformity is the goal of a good head design and that's not always easy to achieve. But, again, tremendous improvements have been made in recent years and if your budget doesn't stretch to a new controller your irrigation system may be improved by installing the latest heads.

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■ An £80million golf complex is being built in east Germany, in the grounds of a hunting lodge where the East German defence minister used to live. The Golfpark Schloss Wilkendorf, about 30 miles east of Berlin, includes an 18-hole championship course designed by Sandy Lyle, another 18-hole course, a PGA teaching academy layout, a driving range and three practice holes for beginners. Jointly financed by German and Swiss investors, it is being built by British firm Southern Golf and is due to open next June.

■ First they blamed the greenkeepers for their missing balls – the grass was too high! Then the golfers at Virvik in Finland thought it might be the ghost of a one-legged farmer who was spiriting away up to 40 balls a day. Then they discovered it was actually a fox making off with thousands of pounds worth of balls. A big search is now on to find the foxhole!

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## Modern way to take a rain check

How much did it rain? You can now check from the comfort of your office with the battery-operated Rain-O-Matic. Described by distributor Modern Measures as "one of the world's most accurate pluviometers", it comprises two units – the collector gauge and the LCD readout display. The collector unit is put outdoors, up to 8m away in a convenient position at least 1.5m above the ground, and the LCD display is placed indoors. The collector gauge accumulates rainfall until the equivalent of 1mm is reached, when an electronic signal is transmitted to the LCD display unit via a thin cable included. The collector automatically empties after each mm is signalled. Price is £33.84. For further details call 01753 889831.

