

MIDWEST BREEZES

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GENTLEMEN, START YOUR HOSES

This year's summer has been a little different than last year. It's been a tale of two seasons. 2010 was hot and wet and 2011 has been hot and dry (until recent record rainfalls). Irrigation systems have already been put to the test. Any gaps in sprinkler coverage have been identified. Frequent sightings of brown turf areas have indicated poor irrigation coverage. Daily checks for clogged nozzles and non-turning sprinkler heads have become routine. Worn nozzles have needed to be replaced. Wetting agents have been applied preventatively and curatively in chronic hydrophobic areas. This has been the year to see how efficient your irrigation system has been. Irrigation water quality can become a factor. Maybe it's time for an irrigation audit. Even the newest irrigation systems with state of the art control require the hand held hose to fill in the gaps. Bottom line given the choice, most Superintendents would prefer to be able to control the amount of water going down on the turf and the hand held hose gives the Superintendent the ultimate control.

On the surface, hand watering with a hose seems like an easy task. Just plug in quick coupler and fire away, right? Not so, hand watering is actually more difficult than it may seem. If we're talking about precise control then just the right amount of water is very important. If not enough water is applied in the morning then by mid-afternoon the desired area can become "baked out". If too much water is regularly applied, then the area can become overly soft and possibly infested with algae or prone to disease or mower injury. It takes a "trained eye" and years of experience to learn and see specific stress areas and be able to identify other potential areas before they become problematic. Different soils such

as sand based greens or tees require different amounts of water than clay or loam based turf. Soils can vary from hole to hole. Irrigation coverage is only so effective and at that point the hose becomes the deciding factor to fill in the gaps.

I spoke with a few Superintendents who we'll refer to as "Hosers" or "Men of Rubber". They use these hoses daily and have become attached to them to the point where they are on a first name basis and have personalized quirky names for them. One Superintendent named his hoses, Hose A and Hose B. Another named his Yorick, after the Shakespearean character. Another interesting name for a hose was Curious George and then another was even called #@*^%&!! These hoses go out in the morning and then again in the afternoon as needed. Some hoses have special trailers with reels that have electric driven retrieval and others are manually hand cranked. Some are even just unceremoniously "hucked" into the back of work cart. A fully charged, 100 foot, 1" hose at 80 P.S.I. is very heavy to handle is not for the weak. You have to lean into it and use your full body to keep steady. I once let my young son Daniel help me out hand watering and he went for a "ride". A charged hose on the loose can be quite dangerous, kind of like an out of control cobra. By the end of the watering shift you can feel it in your arms and you know you did some work. The seemingly, thankless hose becomes the final piece of the irrigation puzzle defense against wilt and drought. A big "shout out" goes to the Crewman who assists in this process. It can mean the difference between life and death of the turf. Thank you Hosers. **-OC**