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THE LITTLE THINGS

Low- to no-cost additions to make your system easier to operate.

Many times the little things make the difference in separating good from average or great from superior. Irrigation design and installation is no different. The little design and installation nuances that make the irrigation system better have always impressed me. When designing, renovating or installing a system, the following are some of the little things that will make your system easier to manage and troubleshoot.

VALVE BOX COVERS

Today's irrigation systems have lots of valve boxes installed for isolation valves, drain valves, air release valves, quick couplers, wire splices and electric valves. When you walk up to a group of valve boxes it would be nice to know what is housed in which box without having to pop them all open, especially if you're in a hurry due to a pipe or fitting break. Valve box covers are available in a variety of colors. Pick one each type of valve, keeping in mind what they'll look like in their installed environment and let your crew know what each color represents.

Tired of not being able to find valve boxes? Here's a hint: attach a #10 stainless-steel washer with a stainless-steel screw on the underside of the cover. This makes the valve box easy to locate with a metal detector. Some manufacturers will even supply the covers with the detection already installed. You can also easily add them to your system's existing boxes.

IDENTIFICATION TAGS

Identifying cables and valves helps tremendously with troubleshooting. With the popularity of today's decoder systems, identifying where a communication cable is coming from along with where it is going should be labeled at the time of installation. For example: "from," "to," "volts," "amps" and "output" at each junction should be put on the tag. Lastly, on conventional systems tagging the communication cable path and all electric valves with controller and zone number is also very helpful.

BALL VALVES

Tired of getting wet when quick couplers are engaged or the key removed? Put a ball valve on the outlet between the key and the swivel using two brass nipples. Now you can keep the water flow off when engaging and disengaging the key, keeping you and your crew drier.

WIRE COLOR

Wire comes in many different colors, for #12 and #14 AWG valve and sprinkler wires, decoder cable and some manufacturer's communication cables. Color coding also helps identify what color operates which communication path or what area of the golf course. For example, greens and tees purple control wires, fairway and rough orange control wires; path A communication blue and path B communication yellow.

However, the most beneficial part

with different colors is distinguishing between old and new wires. When you install new irrigation the new wires should not be any of the same colors as the old wires, so you immediately know which wires you need to deal with.

CASE ALIGNMENT

Ins and outs for greens have been popular for many years, and ins and outs on fairway edges are becoming more popular with today's systems. When you look down on these pairs of back-to-back sprinklers on greens and fairways it would be nice to know which is the in and which the is the out. This is accomplished by placing the selector valve on the opposite side of the sprinkler nozzle. So the "in" sprinklers would have the selector switches on the back side of the sprinkler and the "out" sprinklers on the inside edge against the fairway cut of the green collar.

GRAVEL

Tired of opening a valve box and finding it full of water? Many times this is due to the way the valve box was installed and its inability to drain. If the box is installed on a gravel base, in most cases it will drain. Unfortunately, in most installations, the valve box is installed and gravel is simply poured into the box. This does not help in draining the box at all. Make sure that the box is installed on the gravel, 4 inches is preferred, for it to drain. **GCI**



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