

Real-Life Solutions

■ LOCUST HILL CC, FAIRPORT, N.Y.

Less Water, Looks Great

Wetting agents allow superintendent to irrigate less while maintaining quality turf

BY LARRY AYLWARD
EDITOR

Rick Slattery's explanation for minimum irrigation holds water.

Slattery, superintendent of Locust Hill CC in Fairport, N.Y., is not one for watering the night crawlers out of his course. Too much water, he says, can cause multiple problems.

"Heavy water use promotes *Poa annua*, as well as fungus and disease problems," Slattery says. "It also affects the course's playability."

More water usage equates to a bigger budget because

Problem

Superintendent Rick Slattery was looking for a way to reduce his water usage without sacrificing the look of his golf course.

Solution

Slattery is using less water and maintaining quality turf with the help of a soil penetrant and a soil surfactant.



Locust Hill uses only about 4 million gallons of water during the summer, thanks in part to wetting agents.

more money is spent on pesticides, Slattery notes. He also believes he will soon be taxed by the state for using water drawn from the Erie Canal. "We're getting to the point where even effluent water will be taxed someday," he adds.

Slattery is all for new ways to reduce water usage. But that, he admits, isn't as easy as it sounds.

The problem

Slattery realizes that today's golfers demand to play courses that are thick with soft, lush and glistening green grass. Translation: The courses are watered heavily.

"When golfers allow superintendents to water less, which will cause courses not to look as pretty, we can do more of the right things for the environment," Slattery points out.

When courses are watered less, they require less pesticides to control *Poa annua*, fungus and other dis-

eases. But if that's the case, those same courses won't be as soft and green as golfers like them.

Slattery knows it's wishful thinking to cut back on water use for the sake of the environment and let a course succumb to scattered hot spots and a lighter shade of green. He knows golfers wouldn't accept such "shoddy" conditions. But Slattery also isn't willing to turn up the water to give golfers what they want while sacrificing his personal agronomy plan.

However, Slattery has found an answer to appease himself and golfers.

Solution

Slattery is using less water and maintaining quality turf with the help of wetting agents, specifically Aquatrols' InfilTRx Soil Penetrant and Primer 694 Matrix Flow Soil Surfactant. "We needed something — because we were watering less — to keep

the course looking green," he says.

Slattery began using the soil surfactant on his course's greens about four years ago. The soil surfactant establishes and maintains a downward and lateral water pattern that ensures uniform movement of water and chemicals into the root zone, according to Cherry Hill, N.J.-based Aquatrols.

"We've noticed a major difference in the greens," Slattery says. "When the greens dry out and get crusty, we apply the soil surfactant and the dry areas disappear. The greens look good and play firm and dry."

Slattery injects the soil penetrant, which he has used for about three years, into his irrigation system. It's designed to help the irrigation system distribute water uniformly and penetrate the root zone more effectively. This reduces run-off and evaporation.

Outcome

Slattery says most courses in the area use 15 million to 20 million gallons of water on 18 holes during the summer. Locust Hill uses about 4 million gallons.

Because Slattery has reduced watering cycles, the course is also more apt to take a hard rain. Hence, Slattery's course is open with golf car use the day after a 3-inch rain. The soil penetrant has also helped Slattery

control dry and wet spots, as well as uneven wetting.

"We start injecting the irrigation system in the spring with 10 gallons of the soil penetrant per 1 million gallons of water," Slattery explains. "I go through a 55-gallon drum every year that costs about \$950."

That's not much, especially when one considers that Slattery says he spends about 75 percent less than other area courses on a year's supply of fungicide.

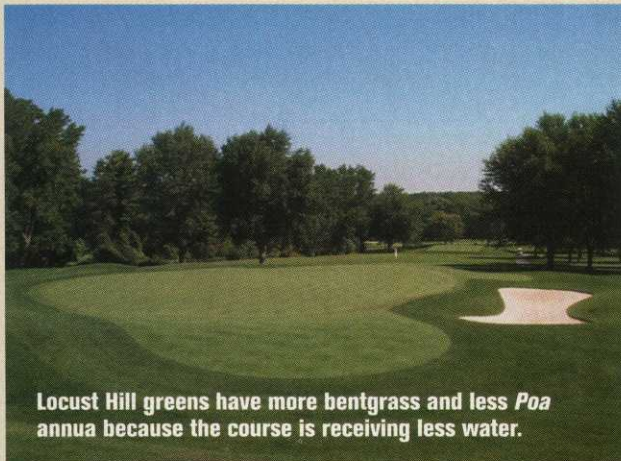
Locust Hill also has more bentgrass because the course is receiving less water. Slat-

So Slattery was guarded when he was approached by an Aquatrols representative, who wanted him to try its soil surfactant products.

"But [the representative] said the products were safe and wouldn't cause phytotoxicity," Slattery recalls of the meeting. "So I gave them a try on a limited basis."

That was four years ago.

Slattery, a veteran superintendent of more than 30 years, began at a course in New Hampshire "when we didn't have all of this high maintenance," he says of



Locust Hill greens have more bentgrass and less *Poa annua* because the course is receiving less water.

ttery explains that *Poa annua* dies if it doesn't receive enough water. "We have a reliable and consistent golf course for all seasons," he adds.

Comments

Slattery used other soil surfactants before and had problems with phytotoxicity, which caused the grass to turn slightly yellow. Despite the positives of surfactants, Slattery says it wasn't worth applying them because of the damage they did.

today's technology for maintaining golf courses. Later, Slattery worked as an assistant at the prestigious Oak Hill CC in nearby Rochester and experienced the high-maintenance end of the business.

But the challenge-minded Slattery wanted a job at a course where he could maintain quality turf without using all the pesticides required for high-maintenance.

He's doing that at Locust Hill. ■

Leaders

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

The board of directors of American Golf Corp. named industry veterans **David Pillsbury** and **Joe Guerra** as co-CEOs.

The following superintendents recently received their certification:

Chris E. Booty, New Orleans CC, New Orleans; **Greg F. Jetter**, Spring Valley GC, Milpitas, Calif.; **Douglas J. Lewis**, Wawashkamo GC, Mackinac Island, Mich.; **Andrew G. Maxey**, Ross Rodgers GC, Amarillo, Texas; **Patrick E. Mertz**, Matheson Green GC, Northport, Mich.; **Louis S. Quick**, Anglebrook GC, Lindendale, N.Y.; **Leon V. Sanders**, Pine Tree CC, Birmingham, Ala.; and **Richard V. Wakefield**, International CC, Fairfax, Va.

Turfgrass Producers International elected **Earl V. Slack** president. Slack is director of southern farming operations for Pacific Earth Resources.

Alexander Marshall was promoted to maintenance operations manager of Environmental Golf. Prior to joining the company in 1995 as an estimator and agronomist, Marshall was superintendent of Brierwood CC in Hamburg, N.Y. The company also named **Susan Crawford** director of golf management. She was previously West Coast regional director for the Palmer Management Group.

Bali Hai GC in Las Vegas named **Richard Friedemann** its superintendent.

Scott J. Mendenhall was named the construction manager and superintendent for Thunderbirds GC in Phoenix.

Heritage Eagle Bend Golf & CC in Aurora, Colo., named **Matthew Molloy** as director of golf and **Roe Sherrbert** as superintendent.

Edward Beidel Jr. was named vice president and director of golf services for Daft McCune Walker, a golf course architecture firm.

Western Golf Properties named **Hugh Edgmon** as president and CEO.

Laurent Reinhardt was named international sales manager for Rain Bird International.

Christopher Hayman, a junior at California State Polytechnic, received the 2000 Ronald Fream Scholarship. Hayman majors in ornamental horticulture with an emphasis in turfgrass management.

Riverdale Chemical Co. promoted **Curtis Clark** to business development and marketing manager. He had been the company's marketing manager since 1998, and previously was with Troy Biosciences.

John Westerdahl was named division sales manager for the western United States by Lebanon Turf Products.

Lisa Bernsh was promoted to marketing coordinator for its Northeast and Western regions by Otterbine Barebo. She was previously a marketing assistant with the company. **Angela Alesihah** was hired by Otterbine Barebo as marketing coordinator for its Southeast and international regions.

Ken Dierks was named vice president of operations for VGM Golf.

Let us know about your people on the move. Send information/color photos to *Golfdom's Frank Andorka* at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, 44130. Fax information to 440/891-2675 or e-mail to fandorka@advanstar.com.