

Real-Life Solutions

■ NAPLES GRANDE GC, NAPLES, FLA.

Right as Rain

Water-absorbing polymer soil amendment helps superintendent solve landscaping irrigation woes

BY LARRY AYLWARD,
EDITOR

When they began building

Naples (Fla.) Grande GC in 1998, workers blasted caprock on the property to create lakes. Instead of hauling the busted rock off-site, they stockpiled it and later used it to build a 30-foot berm around the golf course. It was a great idea to get rid of the rock, but it also presented a difficulty.

Problem

Plants, bushes and trees built on a rocky berm around the golf course had trouble surviving because there wasn't enough soil on top of the berm to hold water.

Solution

A water-absorbing polymer was added to the soil to help it maintain water. The polymer absorbs 35 to 60 times its weight in water and later reduces it to a plant's root zone. Now the landscape life is thriving.



MAT ANDERSON/MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The problem

After the berm was built and topped with dirt, it was landscaped with plants, bushes and trees. Unfortunately, the rocky berm, comprised mostly of calcium, didn't have enough soil on it to adequately hold water in many areas. Poor water retention led to inferior growing conditions.

It was a battle to keep the landscape plants — including viburnums (hedges) and bougainvilleas (shrubs) — from withering away and dying. Naples Grande superintendent Gary Mull and his staff devoted a lot of extra time to their care.

"The plants began to suffer about one month after we put the landscape in," Mull says. "We tried to hand water, fertilize and baby them."

Nothing helped. The fact that an appro-

If you look closely, you'll see Hydrozone globules attached to the roots. But Hydrozone won't compete with the root systems for available water.

priate landscape irrigation system wasn't installed didn't help matters. "We were relying on turfgrass sprinkler heads to maintain a lot of the landscape areas, but they didn't work very well," Mull says.

Viburnums require more water than turfgrass. Hence, the turfgrass flooded when the viburnums were watered. The bougainvilleas, which require less water than the viburnums, also received too much water.

Mull and his crew were forced to hand water and adjust sprinkler heads for proper watering of turf and landscape.

"It was a constant battle," Mull says. "We should have installed the proper

landscape irrigation system."

After a year, several plants, bushes and trees on the berm were suffering or dying because of poor water retention. Mull knew something had to be done.

The solution

Jim Applegate, vice president of operations at Naples Grande, phoned a friend who operated a soil amendment company in Garland, Texas. Applegate asked his friend, Bobby Womack, president of AAdvanced Water Management, if he had any advice on how to combat the problem.

Womack had more than advice. His company manufactured a product called Hydrozone that helps in such situations.

Hydrozone is a water-absorbing polymer that absorbs 35 to 60 times its weight in water and later releases the water to a plant's root zone. Hydrozone, a white free-flowing powder with little or no odor, lessens water loss caused by evaporation and percolation, the company says. When integrated into the growing medium properly, it reduces run-off by at least 50 percent.

Hydrozone was developed to have a limited capacity to absorb water so it doesn't compete with the root systems for available water, according to the

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company. It also retains fertilizers and repels salts. Hydrozone, which can also be used on turfgrass, maintains its strength year after year.

Mull was skeptical of the product but tried it. He mixed Hydrozone with backfill dirt when planting new plants. He added it to the soil of existing trees.

"We put it about 2 inches below the soil surface," Mull says. "It's simple to apply."



EPIC OF WISCONSIN

Thanks to Hydrozone, the berm around the course is maintaining the plants.

A month later, the plants and trees thrived with new leaf growth. Mull says the viburnums, which dried out before, are especially vibrant.

Because of Hydrozone, Mull is confident the landscape can endure the searing sun and dryness often associated with the southern Florida climate. Mull says the product is pricey, but worth it to prevent thousands of dollars of landscaping from dying, not to mention the cost of the labor used to try to keep it alive. As Mull says, it costs about \$200 to replace a tree and about five bucks worth of Hydrozone to keep it alive. ■

The Company Line

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

► Dethatcher

Sisis introduces a deep dethatcher, the Rotorake 600, which has a 13-horsepower engine, a 24-inch working width and a working depth of 2 inches.

The Rotorake incorporates the Sisis contra-rotation principle, where the reel rotates at high speed against the direction of travel. The blades, therefore, cut upwards continuously throwing material forward rather than pushing it into the surface. The machine is also held to the ground to maintain a regular working depth.

The Rotorake also contributes to aeration. The clean, continuous slits assist water and air absorption through a heavy thatch layer, and integration of top dressings is also improved, according to the company.

For more information, contact 864-261-6218,

www.sisis.com or

CIRCLE NO. 200



Management book

Ann Arbor Press/Sleeping Bear

Press offers *Turfgrass Soil Fertility and Chemical Problems: Assessment and Management*,

a single-source management book to help superintendents overcome fertility management challenges. Written by R.N. Carrow, D.V. Waddington and P.E. Rieke, the book addresses how to establish a sound fertilization

program in a problem-solving manner that not only presents detailed scientific principles, but also applies them to practical management.

The book will help superintendents pinpoint the effectiveness of fertilizer programs.

For more information, contact 800-487-2323, www.sleepingbearpress.com or

CIRCLE NO. 201

Polymer-coated insecticide

Pursell Technologies says it has

gained EPA approval for the first polymer-coated insecticide formulated with its patented PRECISE coating technology, which allows gradual release of pesticides through osmotic diffusion. The PRECISE Acephate Granule has substantial application technology. It works in every stage, either as a preventative application or as a curative control for adult insects.

The product controls fire ant, mole crickets, sod webworms, cutworms, armyworms, chinch bugs and more.

For more information, contact 256-249-6888 or

CIRCLE NO. 203



▲ Outdoor furniture

Bristol Bench introduces its Signature Series hardwood furniture, featuring laser-engraved logo branding. Corporate branding enhances the prestige of the Bristol Bench Chadwick-style collection. The company's laser-engraving technology enables it to reproduce the finest logo details.

Bristol Bench uses quality standards in manufacturing its furniture for a lifetime of outdoor use. Every piece is crafted with mortise and tenon joinery for durability and strength. The company uses only shorea, a teak family hardwood known for its weight, hardness and weatherability.

For information, contact 800-390-6883, www.bristolbench.com or

CIRCLE NO. 202



Endwall system

HartmanEW offers an endwall system made of plastic for a variety of drainage situations. The pre-fabricated Hartman endwall system is easy to install and requires virtually no maintenance. It has a hollow base that can be filled on site with various materials.

For more information, contact 412-968-5774, www.hartmanew.com or

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