

You've all seen those yellow and black "Dummies" manuals that are supposed to simplify learning everything from computers to patio gardening.

I thought with all the bad publicity golf courses get in the media, I could create an *Environmental Plans For Dummies* book — where smart superintendents could find tips on how to avoid stupid regulations.

Remember — it's easier and less expensive to manage an issue before it becomes a crisis, and planning ahead will help you do that. Most of the following comments are common sense, but others may need an owner's approval because they can change the look of the course.

A neat maintenance shop

■ Is your shop and maintenance compound neat and clean, or is it a pigsty of clutter and cobwebs? You don't have to have a million-dollar budget to paint and push a broom.

A ramshackle appearance gives the appearance to outsiders of a sloppy overall operation.

Water conservation

■ Experiment with reduced run times for each irrigation station to determine the minimum amount of water necessary to maintain good turf.

■ Document the gallons saved by reduced run times.

■ Upgrade your irrigation system to computerized controls if you can.

■ Investigate alternative water sources because permits and renewals are getting scarce.

Water quality

■ Test the water coming into and leaving your property to see if you have a water-quality problem.

■ Institute "No Spray Zones" around water.

■ Grow turf to 3-inch heights along banks and in the rough to filter storm-water runoff.

■ Plant aquatic vegetation to filter any wayward nutrients.

■ Make sure the greens don't drain into ponds or streams. Create a bubbler exit into a swale for filtering through the soil.

Environmental Plans for Dummies

BY JOEL JACKSON



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Pesticide use

■ Make a map of the entire course to chart insect, weed and disease outbreaks.

■ Spot treat problem areas only. Document the reduced chemical use.

■ When you find signs of pest activity on three or four greens, spray only those greens.

■ Check the weather forecast before spraying.

■ Experiment with bio-control products.

■ Make sure your mix/load and wash-down areas are self-contained. Ensure any spills can be pumped back into the spray tank and applied on the course per the label.

Fertilizer use

■ Do not exceed .5 pounds of soluble nitrogen in a fertilizer blend or during specific applications.

■ Spoon feed with foliar applications whenever possible.

■ Do not tractor-spread fertilizer near water bodies. Make hand applications only along the banks and use minimal amounts of granular or foliar products.

■ Experiment with reducing the total amounts of nutrients you apply.

■ Install a fertigation system when the budget allows.

I have one final general tip that will save headaches for you in the future. Create a formal environmental plan in writing. The best defense is a good offense. Document your practices to show how you are positively managing and reducing environmental impacts.

In most cases, you already do many of the ideas I've outlined, but you don't document them as specific goals. It's time to show the world we're no dummies when it comes to the environment.

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