

# Tips

## → Fountain Maintenance

**While they are self-sufficient, they require proper attention to run effectively and not break down** *By Peter Blais*

**F**ountains improve golf course aesthetics, help control algae and steer golfers clear of water hazards. Superintendents realize their value and will take a number of steps to ensure they work properly through the dog days of summer before servicing them this fall to prepare for next season.

With time such a precious commodity during the hectic summer months, one of the best things about fountains is they generally require little maintenance.

Glenn Miller, superintendent at The Golf Resort at Indian Wells (Calif.), has 20 fountains ranging in age from two months to 10 years. Most are AquaMaster Fountain and Aerator models. He has only replaced three units and a handful of parts. "The fountains are pretty self-sufficient," he says.

On each fountain, Miller changes the oil every two years, relevels the supports occasionally so the float is at the proper level, assures that the spray doesn't wander too far right or left, and cleans the calcium scaling twice a year that can build up on the water-intake screens. (He cleans the screens when the water is warm since the job can require getting into the water.)

Frank Bavard, owner of Custom Fountains, a fountain manufacturer and distributor headquartered in Mason, Ohio, says the only item that needs to be maintained during the summer season on one of his firm's units is the pump intake. "As long as it is not blocked and water can run through the pump as it's supposed to,

you have a product that will last for years," he adds.

Bob Robinson, director of sales with Kasco Marine, says the can surrounding the motor and working parts of the Prescott, Wis.-based firm's fountains should be cleared of calcium, algae or other biological matter every six months. The motor sits inside the can and is cooled by the surrounding water. The insulating effect of unwanted algae and calcium on the can may cause the motor to overheat, shortening its life. Also, a sacrificial zinc anode on the shaft is more susceptible to corrosion than the stainless steel on other fountain parts. It should be checked, and replaced if needed, every six months in the North and more often in the South.

Mother Nature can unexpectedly wreak havoc with fountains during the summer months.

"The only maintenance problem we've had was with a turtle eating an electric line," remembers Tony Rutherford, superintendent at Shadowood GC, in Seymour, Ind., who uses Aqua Control fountains. "One other time we had to replace one of the cables we use to secure the pump to the shore."

Buck Workman, superintendent at Catechee GC in Hartwell, Ga., says lightning has occasionally damaged the units and required an electrician to repair. Otherwise, he does little to them.

Workman says his Otterbine Barebo fountains are part of an overall algae-control plan. Like most superintendents, he uses a variety of programs and products, along with fountains,



OTTERBINE BAREBO

**A fountain needs to have its oil changed and its support relevelled so the float is at the proper level.**

to control the unwanted plant.

Gregg Grenert, superintendent at Samoset Golf Resort in Samoset, Maine, uses six fountains scattered around his property in conjunction with either barley bails sunk below the water's surface or the easier-to-use barley pills to help control algae. He also uses pond dyes that help minimize the amount of sunlight reaching the algae. And he maintains fertilizer-free buffers around his ponds. "The worse thing to do is fertilize anywhere near the ponds because you introduce a food source for the algae," he advises.

### Off-season maintenance

The major decision facing Northern superintendents is whether to remove their fountains in late fall or leave them in the water through the winter months.

Mike Jones, superintendent at the Lochmoor Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich., has two Aqua Control fountains he sinks and runs through the winter as aerators to help keep the fish healthy.

"We do little to them in terms of maintenance," Jones says. "We've had the three-horsepower for three seasons and the two-horsepower for two seasons. Come winter we take the nozzles off so they basically becomes bubblers."

Aqua Control General Manager Reanna Pelszynski says: "We recommend they [superintendents] take the unit out or sink it. It can be used as a de-icer to keep a portion of a pond open for wildlife or to protect a dock if you sink the unit and remove the nozzle."

Grenert removes his fountains from his Maine ponds in November.

"I've built cradles for them where we can keep them in the winter," he says. "We steam clean them, and then go through the fountain to make sure the working parts are clean and lubricated. We store them in a dry con-

tainer. I have a fountain on the 13th hole, and the only thing I've had to rebuild since 1986 is the float itself. If you maintain them properly, you can get a lot of mileage out of them."

Otterbine Barebo Marketing Coordinator Robin Bio offers this advice: "If the unit was in storage over the winter, before re-installation in the spring, we suggest performing a routine maintenance check. Glance over the float and spin the propeller to make sure the bearings are free. To ensure that the unit is in prime condition when it is re-installed, and if the unit incorporates oil into its motor components, this is the ideal time for an oil change. We only recommend an oil change after the second but before the third running season.

"The basic rule: if the water generally does not drop and remain below 30 degrees F, the unit can remain in

the water year-round. It should be run 24/7 to deter any ice formation, which could do serious damage to the motor. If the unit gets frozen into the pond, do not run it until all the ice has melted. Those with oil-cooled motors can keep them in the water year-round. However, diffused air systems should only be kept in so long as there are no moving parts in the water."

AquaMaster Vice President of Sales and Marketing Jerry Goldberg says: "Astute superintendents will have already done a lot of work before putting the fountain in [in the spring]. Look for loose or frayed wires or for any maintenance that can be done internally."

Bio stresses that superintendents be pro-active when water-quality management issues arise and take care of problems immediately, since not acting can result in major turf expenses, particularly on greens. The most common irrigation pond problem, algae and nutrient build-up, can lead to clogged irrigation valves, black root zone and sludge/sediment build-up. ■

*Blais is a free-lance writer from North Yarmouth, Maine.*

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