

**A**re you part of the problem or part of the solution? Before you break out the tar and feathers, be honest in the evaluation of your irrigation scheduling and pesticide and fertilizer applications and, yes, even your property's carbon footprint.

After a recent conversation with a supplier, I was prompted to look inward at our industry rather than taking activists and local politicians to task for their non-scientific approach to environmental protection. If we are claiming some sort of immunity because of best management practices, advanced technology, stewardship programs and the like, then we'd better take a harder look at our own house.

This supplier talked about a client whose new million-dollar irrigation system was set on 20-minute run times regardless of location and head type. That old wall-to-wall, one-size-fits-all management mentality went out with automobile tail fins.

With water restrictions eroding our ability to manage turf in drought conditions, we need these lazy thinkers to be tweaking evapotranspiration rates based on real observation of turfgrass performance and not just arbitrary, convenient settings. We need to find real, practical ways to save water in our irrigation programs.

If you don't have a computerized irrigation system, you can still turn back the dial a few minutes on a number of stations. At 50 gallons to 60 gallons per minute, that adds up to measurable savings. It's time to get away from defensive watering and adopt a water-wise programming mentality. We have to do it during water shortage orders, so why not all year?

Consider the choice of watering greens, tees and fairways versus watering roughs between greens and tees and many tee slopes — isn't it a slam dunk? What kind of statement could it make if every golf course embarked on a program to take a couple of acres per year out of intense or routine maintenance? It would save water, chemicals, fertilizer, labor, fuel and tight budget dollars. Sounds to me like an environmentally and economically sound idea to me.

I know courses that have converted between

## Some Golf Critics Have Cause to Carp

BY JOEL JACKSON



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25 acres to 40 acres of formerly maintained turfgrass into naturalized native plant habitat. Many modern designs are reflecting the target golf concept of having fewer irrigated turf acres without sacrificing aesthetics or playability.

When south Florida was amid its phase-3 water restrictions (45 percent reduction) earlier this year, superintendents and golfers learned that the turfgrass could get by on less water. It took some effort; turfgrass managers had to be diligent and observant about tweaking system run times and schedules each day. It wasn't easy, but many learned irrigation stations could be cut back on time, and the turf did not suffer. The water management districts moved our cheese. We were out of our comfort zone, but the turfgrass survived.

Environmental awareness is here to stay, and there are a few knuckleheads out there who still don't get it. These stragglers keep the spotlight on golf as a target for activists. I interview a lot of superintendents during the year and, by and large, they are doing a very credible job of managing natural resources.

Be that as it may, we will always be held to a higher standard of performance because we are so visible, and we must rise to the challenge. When some of those in our ranks over-water, over-fertilize or over-spray, they are jeopardizing the continued use of some of our critical products and water itself.

Water was the main focus in Florida because of the recent drought, but these Draconian regulations won't stay in the Southeast if superintendents fail to make it a personal goal to maximize the opportunities to minimize all of the inputs on golf courses. Put yourself in a conservation state of mind, for the good of your profession.

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