

THINK ABOUT YOUR WATERING PRACTICES

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The season will soon be here and we, golf course superintendents, will be putting the irrigation systems on our courses into operation. The irrigation system is one of the primary management tools that we have at our disposal. The proper use of this tool is important.

There are several factors that affect turf needs for water applied in the form of irrigation. The first is the growing season, the actual length of time the plant is actively growing. Second is how much and when the turf receives rainfall. The third factor affecting the need to apply water in the form of irrigation is the evapotranspiration humidity. The fourth factor is the soil type. The last factor affecting a need for water would be the type of grass being managed. We are all aware of how these factors work singly and in combination to affect the plants' need for water applied through irrigation.

I have a reason for pointing out these factors and making you begin to think about them. This is so you will realize that watering practices are an important management tool and that these factors will all vary within a given area. That area being the golf course.

I have talked with many superintendents that have no idea how much water they apply. Some give each green ten or twenty minutes of water or set hoses and sprinklers for sets of times ranging from twenty minutes to hours. It is important to know through the use of measuring devices how much water can be applied in a given period of time at the different locations on the golf course. An example of this idea is at Hazeltine. With our watering system I can apply 1/4" of water to the 3rd green in twenty minutes, but on the 9th green it takes forty minutes to apply 1/4" of water. There are many reasons why variations like the one described occur. It may be the distance from the pumping station, the size of pipe or maybe lack of a loop in the system in this area. Regardless of what caused it, this is one of the things a superintendent should know about the system he operates. I feel it is important for the superintendent to take the time to develop precipitation rates on his own golf course.

Only the golf course superintendent on his own particular course will know his soil types, climatic conditions, and grass types well enough to determine when and how much water should be applied. But if the superintendent hasn't developed the background information needed to be prepared to irrigate, then the superintendent is not using the management tool of watering properly. He will possibly be wasting water and will be slighting his membership with less than superior turf conditions.

DON'T FORGET TUESDAY, APRIL 12

Advanced notice has been sent to each member on the April Meeting slated for the Medina Ballroom at 5:00 p.m. with cocktails and dinner following. A big, big extra is the Toro Open House going on all day and featuring a tour of the new facilities, an in-depth one day service clinic and their first annual prices slashed sale. Be sure to send in your advanced reservation form. Mark your calendar now as the May Meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 16 at the Honeywell Country Club and golf is definitely on the agenda. More details later.