

Easy does it

Manufacturers discuss end users' desire for irrigation products that are easier to use and easier to install

BY VICKY POULSEN

With thousands of irrigation components on the market, it can get confusing and costly if you don't keep up with the latest information on these products. Purchasing substandard or too complicated systems can become your worst nightmare.

Also, consider all the issues of installation and maintenance for existing equipment: municipal and regional water restrictions, audits and licensing requirements in some areas of the country and, of course, liability insurance.

Easy-to-use and install products are still priorities, but most contractors also want information and training that come with them. We asked several manufacturers about what they had to offer, and here's what they had to say:

AMETEK INC. ACCESS BOXES, SHEBOYGAN, WI 800/222-7558

Tom Engel, National Sales Mgr.
Irrigation products: Meter boxes manufactured in five major sizes. They have extensions, a variety of names and colors, and various applications in the turf irrigation, waterworks and electrical industries."

Product information: Available through sales reps, distributors

and Web site at www.access-boxes.plymouthwater.com

Key trends: "Labor-saving items like our three-in. extension for 10-in. round box T-tap lids which are easier to open and close. Colored lids are popular because they blend in with the landscape. Lids come labeled with 'Control Valve,' 'Water Meter,' 'CATV,' 'Sewer' and 'Telephone.' "

Best features: "Our lids are strong and long-lasting and come with a 10-year guarantee. They have greater UV-resistance and can withstand heavier loads."

DATA INDUSTRIAL CORP., MATTAPOISETT, MA 508/758-6390

Norman Bartlett, VP Sales & Marketing
Irrigation products: Nonmagnetic impeller flow sensor systems.

Product information: Word-of-mouth, trade publications, trade shows and Web site at www.dataindustrial.com

Key trends: "Customers want products that are easier to work with and install. They want flow meters that tie into the irrigation

controls. That way, they'll interact with the irrigation controller, which will sense if there is a leak or a stuck valve. They also want wireless communications to eliminate the need to run wires between flow sensors and meters."

Best features: "Our Model 1500 flow monitor with the Model IR220B flow sensor gives accurate, repeatable and economical measure of liquid flow in any pipe from 1/2 in. to over 40 in. diameter even at low flow rates. Our forward-swept, six-bladed impeller design provides more constant torque than four-bladed impellers. Coupled with our nonmagnetic sensing mechanism, they're less prone to fouling from particles or debris. Our stand-alone flow sensors are designed with a universal fit.

IRRITROL SYSTEMS, RIVERSIDE, CA 909/785-3623

Keith Shepersky, Brand Mgr.
Irrigation products: A full line of valves, controllers, sprayheads and rotors.

Product information: Available through trade magazine advertising, trade shows., network of distributors and Web site at www.irritrol.com.



Key trends: "Irrigation controllers are now almost required in standard systems. They have schedules which allow them to adapt the program to water restrictions in a specific area every third day or every other day. There's also a move to eliminate the need for a fuse and make the controller diagnose itself and display to the end-user if there's a problem. The controller continues to water all the other operable stations."

Best features: "Our Rain Dial Plus controllers include a 365-day calendar, water budgeting, advanced surge protection and nonvolatile memory."

LASCO FITTINGS, INC., BROWNSVILLE, TN 800/776-2756

Bryan Juwig, National Sales Mgr.
Irrigation products: PVC pipe fittings and specialty items for the irrigation market.

Netafim drip irrigation products help this landscape thrive.



Product information: Get information through wholesale distributors or the Web at www.lascofittings.com.

Key trends: "People who use these products want greater reliability and easier installation. Simplicity is key. Easy installation will help eliminate installation labor costs. For example, PVC pipe fittings are a commodity item, but our swing joints and tap couplings that use special threads are specialty items that a leakproof joint without taping or using pipe sealant."

Best features: "We're introducing several new products this year that promise to make irrigation installation quicker, easier and more stable. These products are the Snap-Lok and Male Brass Stabilizer Elbow, which work together to lock and stabilize a quick coupler valve without the use of any tools."

**NETAFIM USA, FRESNO, CA
559/453-6800**

Kurt Maloney, Market Segment Leader for Landscape.

Irrigation products: Drip irrigation products include the Tech-line® system designed for both commercial and residential use. These drip emitters are constructed inside the 1/2-in. polyethylene pipe for easy installation.

Product information: Netafim's website (www.netafimUSA.com) provides plenty of product and design information. If you're competent at irrigation system design with sprinklers, it will only take you short time to understand how drip irrigation works.

Key trends: "The trend is to save water and this design allows contractors to irrigate without affecting foot traffic or staining walls or structures. Also, you can irrigate anytime, rather than being limited to certain hours for spray."

Best features: "It's an easy system to learn and very quick and inexpensive to install. The pipe can lay on the ground or in a shallow trench (typically 4-in. deep), so your equipment will be cheap and easy to use. It also works in beds and turf, and costs about the same as sprinklers."

**RAIN BIRD, GLENDORA, CA
626/963-9311**

Patricia Thompson, Marketing Communications Manager

Irrigation products: Rain Bird's

line includes rotors, spray heads, valves, controllers, accessories and Xerigation® drip irrigation equipment.

Product information: Through their sales force, distributors, Web site (www.rainbird.com) and marketing programs.

Key trends: "One of the most important trends in irrigation is the need for efficient water management. Rain Bird has developed products to help our customers comply with local watering restrictions and to conserve water. These include: the 1800-SAM-PRS spray head; the Rain Curtain rotor nozzles; and the Maxicom® central control system. The 1800-SAM-PRS spray head is for use in areas with changing elevations and/or high or widely fluctuating water pressures, and to prevent flooding and water waste. Rain Curtain rotor nozzles maximize rotor performance and coverage. The configuration of the nozzle is designed for both close-in and long distance watering. Maxicom central control operates multiple controllers, sensors and other devices from one central location."

Best features: "Products designed to help our customers manage water more efficiently include the ESP-MC controllers with Cycle+Soak, which splits total station run time into usable cycles, minimizing puddling and runoff."

**RAIN MASTER IRRIGATION
SYSTEMS, INC.,
SIMI VALLEY, CA
800/777-1477**

Karrie Bragg, Customer Service
Irrigation products: Controllers, handheld remote controls and central computerized control systems. Product focus is dedicated to the development of state-of-the-art electronics, software and communications for controllers and central control systems.

Product information: "Get information about our products through our sales reps, distributors and Web site (www.rain-master.com).

Key trends: "Landscapers want user-friendly, flow-sensing capability with automatic shutdown and central control. The Evolution (total control with the computer) system is the most popular product with landscapers. We foresee more ET-based scheduling and affordable central systems in the future."

Best features: "Our products have high reliability components; short circuit protection for field wiring faults including sensing and notification for all station outputs; lifetime retention of all programs; time retention without the battery use; electronic fuses with automatic reset; intelligent operation during power outages/restoration; high reliability membrane keyboards; and ease of use."

