

EVENTS

CALENDAR

APRIL

18-20 30th Turf and Landscape Institute, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA. Contact: Ed McNeill, Southern California Turfgrass Council, 2492 E. Mountain St., Pasadena, CA 91104, (818) 798-1715.

30-1 Oregon Golf Course Superintendents Association 27th Annual Meeting, Agate Beach Golf Course, Newport, OR. Contact: Dick Malpass, OGCSA, 10804 NW 11th Ave., Vancouver, WA 98685, (206) 573-6969.

MAY

17 North Carolina State University Turf and Landscape Field Day, NCSU Turf Field Center, Raleigh, NC. Contact: Dr. Art Bruneau, Dept. of Crop Science, NCSU, Raleigh, NC 27695, (919) 737-2326.

JUNE

15 Sports Turf Association Annual Field Day, River Oaks Recreation Centre, Oakville, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Sports Turf Association, 185 Edinburgh Road South, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2H8, (519) 824-4120, extension 3460.

21 Midwest Sports Turf Institute, Harper College, Palatine, IL. Contact: Sports Turf Managers Association, 400 N. Mountain Ave., Suite 301, Upland, CA 91786. (714) 981-9199.

AUGUST

7-8 Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association Summer Meeting, Stone Mountain Memorial Golf Course and Conference Center, Stone Mountain, GA. Contact: George Kozelnicky, GGCS, P.O. Box 6377, Athens, GA 30604-6377, (404) 543-7720.

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

IRRIGATION HAS NO BOUNDARIES



The last four years have changed my attitude about a lot of things in the Green Industry. Living and working in the Southwest has been a real educational experience. After covering the industry for more than a decade, my education was incomplete until I moved West and was able to see and appreciate the importance of irrigation.

The first ten years of my career were spent in the Midwest and Northeast. Irrigation was a luxury except for golf courses. Parks, schools and colleges depended almost entirely on natural rainfall and with few exceptions rarely invested in irrigation systems. There was always the excuse that facilities had made it through droughts before without suffering permanent loss of turf. Living with temporary damage was tolerable compared to the cost and effort required to install irrigation.

When I moved to the Southwest four years ago, it was like a whole new world. Water out here is a year-round concern. With only seven to 17 inches of natural rainfall annually, water is as important to institutions as oil and natural gas are in the Northeast during the winter. No facility can function normally without it.

As I started to learn more about irrigation, I realized that it has no boundaries. It is more than a source of life for turf and landscapes... it is the foundation of all municipal and private high-use recreational facilities. All of us in the Southwest, Southeast and south central United States have discovered for ourselves the absolute necessity of irrigation. Now, everyone else in the country is beginning to learn the same.

Repeated droughts have given many turf managers a new perspective on the importance of irrigation. More of you are experiencing the hopelessness of depending upon natural rainfall for the health and durability of valuable high-use turfgrass sites. You are facing the harsh reality that without a reliable method of applying water to valuable turfgrass areas, months and years of hard work can go down the drain in a matter of weeks.

It doesn't matter where you work anymore. The demand for and use of golf and sports turf no longer allow for weeks or months of drought-inflicted dormancy. We aren't talking about keeping things green. Turfgrasses must remain active to recuperate from traffic and wear throughout the playing season. Use continues with or without water, and with or without dense, durable turf.

This spring and summer, golf course superintendents throughout the country will be cutting back on water. They will concentrate their limited supply on greens, tees, and target areas of fairways. Roughs and large sections of fairways will be brown and hard. But at least superintendents have the ability to control where their limited water supply will go.

Schools, parks and colleges without irrigation won't be able to make such choices. All they can do is watch their fields and surrounding turf areas go dormant. Months of hard work will go to waste... and thousands of dollars in labor and materials will be needed this fall to get back to a starting point. Furthermore, there is no assurance that the exact same thing will not occur next year, and the year after that.

How long will coaches, players and spectators accept poor turf conditions caused by lack of irrigation? How many years can your facility afford to undertake large renovation programs? Can you afford to risk your maintenance budget on increasingly unreliable weather?

If that's not enough to convince management to install irrigation, here is one more fact of life during droughts. Water districts base rationing on current use. Unless you install an irrigation system and claim a certain amount of water for its operation, you will be left out completely when rationing is enforced.

Today water is a major concern no matter where you live and work.

Brent F. Shank