

FROM THE PUBLISHER



The other day I received a call from a golf course superintendent. His course was undergoing a major renovation and the installation of a new irrigation system. He was investigating various irrigation systems and wanted some input.

It used to be that golf course superintendents, sports field managers and the groundskeepers of various large turf areas paid very little attention to the irrigation system. Somehow irrigation seemed foreign to them. The job of repairing broken lines or replacing sprinkler heads was left to someone else on their staff. If a major problem occurred they would call in an "irrigation specialist."

Today this is no longer the case. The superintendent real-izes that without water his green golf course turns brown...which turns off his members. The sports field manager understands that the paying customers who visit the ball park or stadium will not accept brown grass. Neither will his management; nor will the television networks.

Landscape begins and ends with irrigation. In other words, irrigation is the first thing to go into the ground after the ground is cleared, leveled and graded. Once the turf and landscape are installed, irrigation is the last thing to be turned on to water the plant materials.

We are all beginning to understand that irrigation is no longer a luxury but a necessity. What really brought this home was the great drought of 1988. It has made one heck of a statement about the need for irrigation. Those facilities that have irrigation systems enjoyed green turf this summer, while other facilities were left to dry in the sun.

With words like drought, water shortfalls and water restrictions ringing in their ears, golf course superintendents and professional groundskeepers now realize that they have to learn more about irrigation.

It is really not that difficult, and most irrigation manufacturers are happy to work with you. They will sit down and explain your system, how it works, its benefits, etc. With new "user-friendly" controllers on the market, irrigation is becoming easier to understand and use. But I believe there is even more to it. I predict that, in the near future, we will be faced with more watering restrictions. It will be very difficult to explain to a community that has to live with brown grass around its homes how you can keep your own turf green while abiding by the restrictions. This is just one of many reasons why it will now be necessary to have a working knowledge of irrigation.

A number of water districts are mandating that we cut our water consumption, some by as much as 20 percent. Cutting back on the use of water can be achieved without damaging to the turf. Firstly, turf does better when it is watered deeply and infrequently. If watered too often, the turf has a tendency to develop shallow roots. We all know that grass with deeper roots is a healthier turf.

Our job is to maintain the turf, to keep it green and healthy. We use fertilizer to give it nutrients; we use chemicals to control disease, weeds and insects; and we should water in the same light. We will learn how to comply with water restrictions, as we learned how to comply with chemical controls.

The buzz word of the future will be "water management." Good water management will be as important a portion of your job as is knowledge of turf. This is where education comes into play. It is the educational seminars and trade shows that help us bridge the gap between the past, the present, and the future. We should never lose our desire to learn, because that would mark the beginning of the end of our careers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a dark, irregular background.