

Making GREEN Cost Effective

By Dave Doherty

Restrictions on water and chemical usage are here, and the recession is here. Neither of which is going away, and we as professionals must accept these two facts and adjust.

Big Job? Yes it is, but if we truly are professionals we will adjust and be more effective in how we meet the challenges and produce an even better product for our customers and members.

A recent conversation with a very successful superintendent centered on how he needed to be much better at his job than three years ago. The recession and last year's *high temperatures* forced him to rethink many of his practices and to think further about what his plants need for oxygen.

We learned last year that even with ideal physical properties in our greens root zone that there was not enough oxygen in our root zones [*during severe heat stress*] to meet the needs of our bent grass plants.

Last year I worked with a number of golf courses on ways of supplying more oxygen to the plants root system through the root zone by way of the drain tiles and gravel blanket.

We used Sub-Air and Precision Air units, converted surface air blowers such as the Toro and Buffalo units, and back pack blowers to push air from the surface, through the drain tiles, from where it traveled through the gravel layer and up into the root zone for uptake by the plants root system.

The particular superintendent was continuing the process he had started of finding his greens' drain tiles and clean outs and transforming those that needed it into being able to accept and successfully distribute surface oxygen to his plants roots.

It had become a practice that works for him.

Chemical and water (sub head)

The U.S. government issued an edict a few years ago requiring that the usage of all *chemicals* be reduced by 20 percent over the next 10 years and follow that with a requirement that all *water* usage be reduced by 20 percent over the next 10 years also. This edict applied to all sports turf areas, including club house grounds and all areas surrounding a sports turf facility, golf, tennis, athletic fields, play ground areas etc.

During the spring of 2010, the water edict was changed to read that water usage would be reduced by 20 percent by the year 2015, based on the usage from the year 2009. The new edict applies to all U.S. government areas and not just sport turf areas, including the Pentagon and the White House grounds.

The U.S. government is going green everywhere. This program of reducing chemical and water usage that the government has started is for real and is here to stay.

The information that we at I.S.T.R.C. have gathered over the last 20 years about physical properties, water retention and plant stress will allow the government's program to be successful and be a role model for all of us in the years to come.

The non-government sector of sports turf will follow the government's lead if for no other reason than the cost savings, which are on average 20 percent a year.

What a wonderful thing of beauty when we can reduce cost of chemicals and water, produce a better product – healthy turf – and help the environment.

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