

TURF TWISTERS

QUIET GOLF

Question: We have a noise ordinance in our community that prevents us from operating gas-powered equipment prior to 7:00 a.m. The golf course opens for play at sunrise, which means the course is covered with golfers by the time we are able to start the crew and mow the greens. It takes us twice as long as most courses just to set up the course. Do you have any suggestions for dealing with this situation? (California)

Answer: One option is to look at battery-powered electric equipment such as greens mowers and bunker rakes that are quieter than most gas-powered equipment. This would allow you to start prior to 7:00 a.m. without disturbing the neighbors. You also may need to do some creative new scheduling such as mowing tees, fairways, and rough in the afternoon and early evening so that fewer activities are performed first thing in the morning. Also, take the time to meet your neighbors on the golf course and discuss your situation. You may find that some residents are enthusiastic golfers and can help you get a variance to the noise ordinance.

CONSERVES

Question: Our course is located in a desert climate and I am interested in conserving as much water on our golf course as possible. What suggestions might you offer? (Arizona)

Answer: For starters, check the irrigation distribution uniformity of your large turf areas by performing a catch can test. Uniformity of a well-designed and maintained system should be at least 75% and potentially exceed 80%. Another area where more significant savings are possible is in the clubhouse landscape beds. Spray-type nozzles that normally yield very poor uniformity (often in the range of 40% to 55%) can be retrofitted with drip irrigation systems that can increase efficiency upwards to 95%!

NEIGHBOR RELATIONS

Question: We are preparing to rebuild the bunkers on our course. A neighboring course rebuilt theirs last year and the players are still complaining about “fried egg” lies. Is there any way to find out if we will have the same problems? (Louisiana)

Answer: Sands vary widely in their characteristics and therefore their tendency to yield “fried egg” lies. The shape and surface roughness (or smoothness) of the sand particles as well as the size of the particles greatly impact the bunker playing quality. As a general rule, sand that is made up of many differently sized particles will yield a firmer surface than a sand composed of uniformly sized particles. Similarly, a sand whose individual particles or grains have rough surfaces and are more angular in shape are more firm than a sand with smooth, round particles.

Many physical soil testing laboratories can measure these factors and predict how prone a sand will be to “fried egg” lies. These tests should be performed on each sand you are considering using. However, since golfers vary widely in their highly subjective judgments about how a bunker should play, it is still a good idea to build a test bunker that is divided into sections for each type of sand being considered. Let the players practice from this bunker for at least two or three months prior to making a final decision on which sand to use.

A detailed guide for selecting sand for use in bunkers can be found on the USGA's website at www.usga.org/green/coned in the *Bunkers* section.