

Advancing the Turfgrass Industry in New Jersey and the World



TURF TIP TIME #9 with the NJTA: **Seize the Opportunity to Paint an Overall Picture**

Underground and underrated, drainage work is often out-of-sight and out-of-mind. That is, until the price tag hits the budget. As such, it can be difficult for turfgrass managers to convince their ownership to financially back large-scale drainage projects. One way to get to yes, in situations like this and in a more general sense, is to seize every opportunity to use the obstacles of today to better paint an overall picture of your long-term agronomic needs.



“Whatever concern is fresh in people’s minds, whatever the hot topic/current problem affecting your golf course or facility, that is the project to focus on,” said Echo Lake Country Club Superintendent Chris Carson.

Flooded fields are immediately muddy and unplayable. Even days after, turfgrass drowned in sitting-water looks unhealthy and unattractive. When invisible needs (like installing underground pipes) are suddenly very visible, “that is the time to tackle large projects.”

Chris suggests leveraging the most evident damage/problems to help sell your greens team’s needs. “In a wet year, you’ve got stormwater issues, so you focus on

resolving drainage issues. In a drought year, you work on irrigation. In a disease year, you modify your disease prevention plan.” Cliché as it is to say, every problem is an opportunity.



In addition to taking advantage of current challenges to purposefully time proposed projects, Chris recommends steering clear of nitty gritty details and instead highlighting overall gains. French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry poetically captured this idea by writing, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”

In terms of turf management, it is irrelevant to the owner of your golf course, stadium, or park whether you choose a dual wall, corrugated, high-density polyethylene pipe or a single wall, perforated plastic one. What matters is that their facility is flooded and not useable or profitable. Details have their place, but first, you must convincingly communicate the overall need, goal, and benefits of the proposed drainage project.



Whether you need to dig out a drainage swale, install a new irrigation system, or modify how and what you spray, it is important to paint an overall picture. “This will help energize decision makers, your bosses, and crew members,” said Chris. Remember to address the issue while it is hot and to keep your communications focused on the prize.



NJTA's TURF TIP TIME Brought to You By: Chris Carson

Chris Carson is a GCSAA Class A golf course superintendent at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield, N.J. An instructor in the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School, he has been honored three times with the GCSAA Leo Feser Award for his articles published in Golf Course Management magazine. He received a BS in environmental science/turf management from Rutgers University in 1979, and is a past president of both the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey and the New Jersey Turfgrass Association.

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