



New technologies allow ornamental iron fences such as this Ameristar Fence Products installation at Trilogy at Power Ranch in Gilbert, Ariz., to last 20 years or longer.

High-tech savings

OPERATIONS WHAT'S NEW

Developers, operators embrace innovative construction products to help cut costs

Confronted with challenging economic and environmental conditions, some in the golf industry are turning to construction products that place a premium on long-term cost savings.

"Most golf courses right now are looking for opportunities that are going to reduce investment," said Jeffrey Bruce, founder of the landscape architecture firm Jeffrey L. Bruce & Co.

Organic products like sphagnum and reed-sedge peat moss have thus grown in popularity, according to Steve Young, global sales representative for Peat Inc.

"They offer enhanced nutrient and water holding capacity and they're more nutrient-rich," Young said. "The time from when you seed the turf to when you can putt on it is greatly reduced and many of the issues you deal with after grow-in are avoided."

Paying a little more upfront for organic peat can yield considerable long-term savings for operators, according to Bruce, who has used peat products on a variety of golf projects including Nanea Golf Club in Kailua Kona and New Orleans Country Club in New Orleans.

Young estimated that including peat and blending services to produce a

USGA-standard root zone mix will add \$8 to \$10 per ton, meaning an additional upfront cost of \$64,000 to \$80,000 is realized to produce 8,000 tons of mix for a golf course project.

Bruce points to Nanea Golf Course as an example of savings being realized on both the front and back ends.

"There was no soil there whatsoever," he said. "I estimate we were able to save about \$2 million in upfront construction and long-term maintenance costs by using the organic compound to create a stable solution."

New cost-saving technologies extend beyond just agricultural products.

Ameristar uses micro-biotic technology to coat both the interior and exterior of their Montage steel ornamental fences, allowing the company to offer the product with a 20-year warranty.

"A typical ornamental iron fence would have to be replaced once or more over the course of that same 20-year period," said Craig Summer of Ameristar. "The developer) has to keep throwing money at that fence."

Also gaining traction are high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe systems for irrigation of courses.

Utilizing fused-pipes that only deliver

pumped water when it's required, HDPE irrigation systems have a zero-percent allowable leakage rate, compared to the 22-percent rate on more commonly used polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe systems.

ISCO Industries' HDPE systems usually price within 5 percent of the cost of a PVC system, according to Doug Zak, international/national irrigation sales manager.

Zak estimates that 15 percent of the golf industry is now utilizing HDPE irrigation, compared to just 2.5 percent three years ago. He projects the number will jump to 25 percent or higher next year.

"Water preservation isn't just a goal any more," he said. "It's a necessity. Water's more precious than oil at this point."

A recent study conducted for Estero Country Club in Fort Myers, Fla. by Chris Menno, golf operations manager for Stalman England Irrigation Inc., compared water usage with a new HDPE irrigation system to that with a new PVC irrigation system. Menno was one of three contractors bidding for the project when he conducted the study.

The HDPE system was shown to save more than 291,000 gallons of water annually. Menno, who was proposing to use an HDPE system, won the job.

—Scott Desiere