

Maintaining a healthy growth of vegetation during dry seasons

By Ann Ho

The HK Observatory recorded the lowest relative humidity of 46% in November, which is 23% lower than the normal. Under such dry weather condition, it's no wonder that vegetation can easily die from thirsty. However, are there any indicators that Engineers can follow so that they can take pre-caution actions before it's too late?

DRY SEASONS BEGIN Entering October, autumn sets in and weather becomes cooler and drier. In November, the average relative humidity recorded is 62% against the normal of 69%. Moreover, the lowest daily relative humidity recorded in the month so far is 46%. On the other hand, up to November 26, only 3.8mm of rainfall is recorded against the average normal of 35.1mm. No rainfall is recorded for more than 18 days in the month. So, it's not difficult to image how does the vegetation dry out, turn yellow and die out eventually.

THE ONLY PRE-CAUTION MEASURE TO PREVENT VEGETATION FROM DRYING OUT In order not to avoid wastage of resources and efforts put in nurturing a

green environment, extra attention shall be paid to monitor the humidity conditions of the plants and special care shall be taken to arrange adequate watering during drought. Actually, it's easy and simple to keep the vegetation growing heavy even during dry condition. The one and the only one secret is adequate watering.

INDICATORS FOR WATERING REQUIRED

In general, there are 3 main indicators that tell us if watering is needed. Firstly, it's the hydroseeding season. The most ideal hydroseeding seasons shall be spring and summer that the weather is neither too cold nor too dry. Vegetation can grow with natural supplements of sufficient sunshine and moisture. On the contrary, for those vegetation works carried out during autumn and winter when the relative humidity is particularly low, we cannot rely on the natural climate solely for the provision of sufficient moisture to help the vegetation to be established. To cut it short, it is more likely that watering is required if the vegetation works is executed during dry seasons.

Secondly, the seed species being used is another key determinant. Normally, summer seeds demand more water for establishment and growing. Should the summer seeds being used in the dry seasons, it is expected that more frequent watering will be required. Thus, it is recommended not to cross mix of seasonal seeds in order to lower the requirement of watering.

Thirdly, it is the amount of rainfall. Normally, the climate is relatively dry during autumn

and winter in Hong Kong. The situation is even worse when it is confronted with the dry tropical continental cyclones. Normally, watering shall be carried out if there is minimal or even no rainfall recorded in 2 weeks.

Useful checklists:

- Hydroseeding time – season & how long
- Seed species – summer or winter seeds
- Any rainfall in the past 2 weeks