

PARKLAND!

WHEN you think of parkland golf courses, you imagine lush green, almost pasture, land with woods and big trees dominating the landscape. In fact, the word park is defined as a large enclosed piece of ground with woodland and pasture attached to a country house. So, if you make the house into a clubhouse and the ground into a golf course, you have a parkland golf course!

There are differences in the maintenance of parkland to other courses. The most important one is tidiness. A parkland course must never look untidy, although I would not suggest that other types should look unkempt.

Trees are vital to parkland and have, in recent years, become a big problem with the ravages of dutch elm disease and many other destructive elements. We need to be much more aware of the needs for replanting and the types of tree that are going to grow on our courses.

We have often seen greens committees and greenkeepers trying to plant, with all the best intentions, the wrong types of tree and, in many cases, in the wrong place, forgetting how big they become. It is much better to call in a good architect if a programme of tree planting is to be carried out.

Maintenance of trees is also a consideration and, in many cases, there is a tendency to forget this

when planting. Plant back-up trees for the more important trees, golfwise, on your course. Then, at least, you will not have a big space left when a tree is lost. Do not plant the same type of tree as the one already there, for if it is lost to disease, it is almost certain you will also lose your back-up tree to the same disease.

Trees can be purchased as semi-mature, up to 25-30ft. Of course, they cost more, but it may be worth spending the money if you have a golf hole spoilt by the loss of a tree. But it is better to plant young as long as time is on your side.

A good selection of trees would always include:

●Horse Chestnuts need only be avoided where wet clay forms the site to be planted on. They grow quickly and will reach 90-100ft with a spread of 60ft or more. All heights and spreads should be taken into account when planting.

●Beech. Although chalk and limestone soils are its natural home, the common beech will grow in most situations, including exposed ones near the sea. They can reach 80-100ft with a spread of 70ft.

●Limes are accommodating and will succeed in most types of soil. They are among the finest of parkland trees with a height of over 100ft and a spread of 50ft.

●Sycamore is quick growing and hardy. It has a height of 80ft-100ft

and a spread of 50ft-60ft.

●Oak. Of all oaks, the turkey oak and the common oak are the best known. The turkey oak is the fastest growing of the two and will grow in any soil as long as there is plenty of depth. It will grow up to 100ft and spread up to 80ft. The common oak will grow 60-70ft and spread 60ft.

●Willows are usually associated with damp, but may be grown in most, soils.

●Hornbeam is one that will also grow in most places, as well as damp heavy soils.

It is well worth spending a little time to become more knowledgeable about your trees. Of course, trees need attention, keeping the low branches trimmed to the needs of the golfer, cutting off the sucker shoots, taking out dead wood, etc. The big task comes each autumn when leaves start to fall and you will probably need a leaf sweeper!

Finally, a word of warning. The tree root will spread to find water. It will often contain a central root, the tap root, with many branches from which a mass of fibrous roots will grow. These can spread well beyond the spread of the tree, so care should be taken not to plant too near to greens, etc.

●The above is an extract from a paper given by Gordon Childs at the recent SIGGA educational conference.

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