

# TREES ON GOLF COURSES — PART 1



Trees can add a great deal to the attractiveness of a landscape.

**IN this series, I'm going to explain how to select, buy, plant and maintain trees for golf courses. Some of my ideas you might find novel or controversial, but I make no apologies for this. If, by the end of the series, your awareness of the potential of trees on golf courses has been increased, then I'll have achieved my primary objective.**

## By Tony Gentil

Let me start by explaining what I see as the major benefits of planting trees on golf courses. On large areas of open space, trees can add a great deal to the attractiveness of the landscape. They provide scale, colour and interest. They are also useful for screening off eyesores and forming windbreaks to improve the micro-climate.

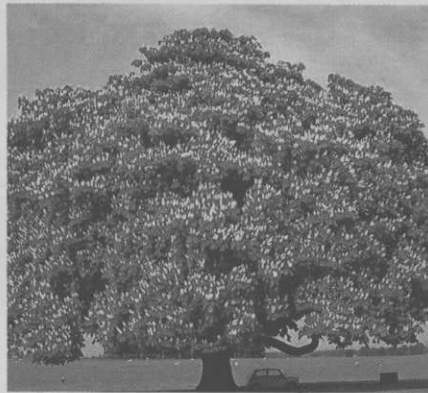
Trees will, to some degree, act as a barrier to noise and atmospheric pollution, important considerations where you have a course alongside a busy road.

Conservation of wildlife is uppermost in many people's minds and trees can offer a diversity of habitats that encourage and sustain many species of animal and plant under the threat of extinction.

Obviously, to the golfer, trees can feature as major elements to test skill. What isn't perhaps so obvious is that well-grown timber can find an eager market and trees could be considered as a potential source of income to the club.

So, having outlined the reasons for planting trees, let me tell you how to decide what to plant.

I must confess I envy the golf



Utilise open space by planting large growing trees.

course manager faced with the task of choosing trees. He hasn't got the problems of the town planter trying to grow trees in confined spaces. Complaints from town dwellers that trees are blocking light through windows, filling gutters with leaves, interfering with television reception and pushing buildings over all make you sometimes wonder if town planting is worth the effort.

When it comes to selecting trees for golf courses, I would say that you could choose any of the trees that are hardy in your area. Basically, if the land will grow grass, it will also grow trees. This means that you have a choice from several hundred different species and cultivars.

Conservationists argue that, if you wish to encourage wild life, then you should only plant native trees. I feel that this approach is a bit too restrictive. There are no more than a handful of tree species native to Britain and using them exclusively cuts down your choice drastically.

Furthermore, conservation is only one beneficial aspect of tree planting and there are other equally valid considerations. Even the most 'natural' looking golf course owes much to the hand of man and I see no reason why you shouldn't include foreign tree species in your planting scheme.

As a general rule, I would plant large growing forest trees, such as lime, beech, oak, horse chestnut and some conifers where there is ample room for them to spread unhindered. In formal areas, say near the clubhouse, I would use the



A standard tree.

smaller growing 'manmade' trees, such as cultivars of mountain ash and Japanese cherries.

On most courses, I would plant both conifers and deciduous trees. Conifers come into their own in winter, screening eyesores and acting as windbreaks. They also provide a superb backcloth to deciduous plantings, particularly when the latter are coming into leaf in the spring or having a final fling of colour in the autumn.

Tree planting costs a lot of money and, under certain circumstances, it is possible to obtain financial grants from bodies such as the Forestry Commission. If you are considering large-scale planting, it is certainly worthwhile finding out if your scheme is eligible for grant aid beforehand. Amenity societies and conservation groups might be prepared to help with financial or physical assistance.

The best method of obtaining trees for planting, without a shadow of doubt, is to visit several nurserymen and see the trees growing on their home ground. Nurserymen prefer this method of selling trees because it means that the reputable grower can show you the quality of his stock, which isn't easy for him to do if you are buying by mail order. A description in a nursery catalogue can never be a substitute for seeing the real thing. You wouldn't dream of buying a secondhand car without seeing it first and the same logic applies to buying trees.

Don't worry if you've never bought trees before, simply use your commonsense. Ring up a nurseryman, arrange an appoint-

## TREES ON GOLF COURSES CONTINUED...

ment and then go along and keep your eyes open.

You'll find out most of what you need to know about the quality of his nursery stock even before you get out of the car. If the place looks a tip, with rusty machinery lying all over the place and debris thrown in corners, then you've a good idea of his attitude of mind. Have a look at his trees by all means, but I'll bet you find they are fighting for life among a tangle of weed.

By the same token, an immaculate nursery should be a guarantee of good-quality trees.

The nursery trade, like any other profession, has its own jargon and there are three main types of tree you could buy. First, there are 'forest transplants.' These are very small



Cultivars of mountain ash (above) and Japanese cherry (below).



trees, usually grown from seed and two to three years old - each will be 4in-6in tall. These are the cheapest and used in their millions for mass planting.

The second group are called 'whips.' These are small trees with a single whip-like stem hence their name. Whips vary in height from about 2ft 6in to 6ft. These cost about 50p each and are, for most situations, the best trees to buy. They are easy to plant, don't need staking, establish well and need the least maintenance of all the three groups.

Finally, there are 'standards.' These are the type of tree traditionally used for planting in streets. They have a trunk clear of branches up to a height of 6ft and, from there, the head develops, rather like a lollipop.

Standards are the dearest of all, costing between £10 and £20 each. They need staking for the first two to three years after planting. Although still popular, they never look as natural as whips and for large-scale planting can be horrendously expensive.

My next article will explain how to plant your trees.



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