

If you think I'm going to tell you that you need to plant a lot of exotic vegetation on a golf course to make it more playable, beautiful, or profitable you're barking up the wrong tree. Golf does quite well in its birthplace, Scotland, and the last tree I saw on those seaside links was knee-high to a sheep dog.

Now, I could beat around the bush and talk about the trend of manicured garden-type golf courses, but someone else probably already did it better elsewhere in this issue. I will, however, try to get to the root of many superintendents' concerns when the Greens

Committee wants to add a

flower bed on every tee and plant a grove of trees in every rough.

It may come as a big surprise to everyone, but when a golf course is designed by a reasonably competent architect whether it was in 1910 or 1993, he was allowing for sunlight, air circulation, irrigation coverage, drainage, traffic patterns, shot values, etc. Remember, the architect never promised you a rose garden, just a golf course.

When a club starts adding "extra" features they need to be prepared to pay for more than just the plant material. If the maintenance staff is already working to full capacity, somebody else is going to have to fertilize, prune, weed, spray, and edge the "new beds." That may mean hiring additional staff. Some clubs

do have successful programs where the members themselves care for the "extra beds." Let me hedge a little here and note that type of program works best at a private club with a dedicated and involved membership.

Remember, when you plant that tree, mighty oaks from little acorns grow. So, don't get too close to the greens, tees, and fairways. It seems that tree shade and tree roots are in direct, and usually victorious, competition with grass plants. They will rob the turf of its vigor and playability. Flower beds that get too close to tee tops rob equipment of turning room and cause more wear to the turf. Sometimes, the staff then has to revert to using smaller-sized mowing equipment which is more labor intensive. "Labor intensive" is a synonym in finance jargon for "expensive!" Often, the water and fertilizer requirements of the "pretty flowers" are also in conflict with the needs of the surrounding turf.

Now, you'd think I was a blooming idiot if I didn't admit that there are some very beautifully landscaped courses around the world. But, you'd be looking through rose colored glasses if you didn't admit that they pay for what they get!

Let me go out on a limb here and suggest you look strongly at using native vegetation to accent you're course. It will give you a lot of choices for color and texture and yet help conserve water resources and keep maintenance costs down.

I'd better close now or the editor will be pruning this columbine.

Mulch Ado About Nothing

Green Side Up



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