"W"orking against the budget" is the
greatest factor in preventing the
greenkeeper from doing in the fall a great
deal of effective work that would enable
him to get an early start on the following
year's operations. Whereas, if a judicious
expenditure were made in the fall, even
though it exceeded the budget allotment,
it would be more than repaid by a con-
tented membership, and thus cut out the
kicks that are otherwise bound to occur.

In the first place it is the exception to
find a course so constructed that altera-
tions or modifications of one kind or an-
other are not necessary and in this respect
alterations made by one green-committee
will not suit the ideas of their successors.

Members of a green-committee, most of
whom play their home course exclusively,
are seldom capable of seeing its weak-
nesses, and neither are the crack players
of the club who are often called upon for
advice regarding contemplated changes.
The expert player can usually distinguish
a good hole from a bad one, but rarely has
he the creative genius to visualize a good
one.

When improvements or alterations are
contemplated or necessary, even if the
alterations be minor ones, the committee
should engage the services of an architect,
and the final choice should be made only
after the committee has seen and studied
his work on other courses. To those who
have made a study of golf course architec-
ture, or even to the observing golfer who
has played many courses, it is quite easy
to distinguish an architect's work. Archi-
tects have their style just as our promi-
inent artists and writers have, and one
architect's style will appeal to the com-
mittee more than another's. Oftentimes
only a day or so of his time is required
to solve the remodeling problems and to
make a plan for future improvements so
that anything that is done will be always
a part of the ultimate plan, and not some-
thing haphazard or the particular whim
of the chairman of the green-committee.

The cost of such service is insignificant in
comparison with the money that can be
saved through his advice and the future
satisfaction which the club members will
derive. For work of this kind the only
plan that is feasible is for the club to set
aside a certain sum of money annually,
because it is unfair to the greenkeeper to
have such a sum marked against main-
tenance cost—when it is purely an improve-
ment or construction item.

The fear of "being hauled on the carpet"
often prevents the greenkeeper from doing
CUTS EXPENSES

(Richmond County Country Club)

After—Note windmill in center of picture. Now machine maintenance is easy and costs are cut

a great deal of work of this kind in the fall of the year. His only thought being to see how soon he can dispense with the men, which he proceeds to do. Then when spring comes, the greenkeeper and green-chairman will say, "Well, that ought to have been done last fall, but we didn't get to it."

Alterations and improvements to the course are by no means the only work passed over for the same reason.

Why Costs Mount

We might ask ourselves, "Why are maintenance costs mounting year after year?" Simply because labor costs have risen and we are working in the same old way as when wages were half what they are today, without bringing our facilities up to date. About 75 per cent of the labor costs are chargeable to two divisions: No. 1, grass cutting, which includes the mowing of greens, tees, fairways, banks, approaches, bunkers and rough; No. 2, the making, screening, preparation, distribution and spreading of compost.

No. 1: Grass cutting with our improved mowers is very efficiently done.

No. 2: Compost making, etc., is very backward, and this in spite of the latest developments in screening devices. Compost will always be a big factor in the maintenance of golf courses, and the efficiency of its preparation and handling will be the determining factor of its cost. Turf grasses on soils of ordinary productivity can be maintained indefinitely by the use of chemical fertilizers alone. But the continued use of chemical fertilizers without any organic manure produces a solid, hard condition on clay soils which is not desirable from a golfing point of view. This condition is prevalent on farm lands where the continued use of chemicals alone has been the practice, even though it be cultivated once or twice a year, and can be overcome only by the use of stable and green manures, which are absolutely necessary for encouragement and life of beneficial soil bacteria.

The same condition is making itself felt now on many a golf green, where pitching to the green is becoming a problem on account of the green's hardness. It is impossible to plow up the greens every year. But they need always an abundance of decaying vegetable matter—the bacteria will do the rest. Plant roots feed as near to the surface as the heat of the sun or the moisture of the soil allows. The upper layer of the soil is usually rich, especially in sod land, and the plant food is continually becoming available. A thin
mulch of compost keeps this upper layer moist and adds to the feeding ground of grass plants.

It can, therefore, be seen that there is a multiple effect from the use of compost, and that the compost pile plays a very important part in the life of a golf course, and rather than give up the practice as many have done, it must be encouraged to the very limit.

Compost Extravagances

Now that we have touched on the importance of compost, what is the history of the average compost pile? Ninety-five per cent of compost piles are made in the open and, therefore, can only be worked when thoroughly dry. Which means the best days of summer, when the course is calling out for a dozen and one other things to be done. The result is, more men are hired in order to catch up. Whereas, if there is a compost shed large enough to carry out all the operations necessary, the compost pile can be made inside in the fall, and be ready to work in the spring, irrespective of weather conditions. You are then in a position to top-dress as soon as the weather opens up, something obviously impossible to do if your compost pile is not sheltered.

Speaking from experience, the amount of money actually saved by having a compost shed (to say nothing of the satisfaction of being able to top-dress when you feel like it) is hard to believe.

I built a compost shed in the fall, two years ago. The size is 28 feet by 75 feet (four feet wider, i.e., 32 feet by 75 feet, would be ideal). The first year I stored about 450 cubic yards of compost, sufficient for two seasons. The following spring we screened and prepared sufficient compost to top-dress a month earlier than usual. Since this time we have always had at least 100 cubic yards of compost in readiness; all of which has composted a year at least, and this without cost, because we do this on rainy days, so that the labor employed would otherwise have to be charged to lost time. Not only this, but we have been able to dispense with three men without feeling their loss, thus saving $3,500 a year in wages for the club.

Saving Costs

On most courses men are paid by the week. On rainy days they either go home or sit around the barn. Mr. Chas. H. Hart, C. E., green-chairman of the Siwanoy Country club, who is a keen student of costs, tells me the item of waste time amounted to $2,317.32 over a 3½-year period. This sum would build, or at least go a long way towards building, a compost shed. It would certainly pay the interest on a very handsome service building, paying, as a dividend, the actual cost of making compost. Which, as in my own case, amounted to $3,500.

New York district never has had such a phenomenally wet season as this year. We have had the normal year's precipitation in three months. Nevertheless our top-dressing program has not been interfered with, on account of having, at all times, a good supply of prepared compost.

The fall is the ideal time to take care of these problems, as maintenance work is at a minimum. A fall program can include, besides architectural changes and compost, the sodding of tees, sanding of bunkers, the levelling out of odd corners, and the drawing out of mounds, etc., so that the tractor will be able to cut places now mown by hand, or anything that will increase the efficiency of the men and add to the pleasure of playing.

I do not mean to assume for a moment that upkeep costs will decrease, but I do insist that very much more can be gotten for the sum expended, if the clubs will modernize their facilities.

If your club plans to add more bird-houses around the grounds before next summer, buy them now and get them up. Birds object to newly-painted domiciles and will rarely use them until they have weathered for several months. It is a mistake to wait until spring to erect bird-houses.