

Partition plantings

The 'walls' of the course

A golf course without partition plantings would be much like a house with no inner walls.

If we were to define partition plantings, we might say it consists of those plants which separate one playing area from another on the golf course. They do the same thing on the golf course that the inner walls do in our homes. They create an atmosphere of separateness or privacy as you move from one hole to another.

The total function of the partition plantings is very important if you want to consider your course not only a true test of golf, but an area of beauty.

How do they affect play?

First of all, they definitely play an important part in the safety of the game. They keep balls from flying from one playing area into another. Most of us cut our teeth on some nine or eighteen hole course where there were very few trees on the entire layout. How easy it is to remember the flying objects, in this case identified, going from one fairway onto another. I can recall that my first feeling about the game of golf was that it was a very dangerous pastime.

Often the probability of a hooked or sliced ball from a nearby tee will very much determine the density of the planting and the height of the planting in these partition plantings.

Secondly, trees in partition plants along major impact areas, both for the high handicapper and the low handicapper can really affect the difficulty of playing each hole, by opening up or tightening up the hole as might be required to improve the play of the hole.

What will the wind do?

Partitions also play an important part when it comes to the wind factor in relation to the game itself.

Some partition plantings act as funnels for wind depending on the orientation of the fairway in relation to the prevailing winds in that part of the world while others act as wind breaks.

Along those fairways which must go with the path of the prevailing winds, the partition plantings would ideally be a more open nature with more breaks in the trees, than a partition which would serve to buffer the wind and, thus, be more dense with fewer breaks.

Awareness of aesthetics

As for the aesthetics of the partition plantings, they certainly create a special relationship between the course and the golfer himself. For those golfers who are not out there trying to break par every day or for those who are not professionals, the total golf course really should be a place of recreation for the mind and soul. This is especially so for people who work and live in the city or even in condominiums or townhouses and then go out to the golf course to get their batteries recharged so to speak.

It's the composition of these partition plantings along with the border plantings which we spoke of in the previous article that really makes or breaks a course as far as natural beauty is concerned.

The differences between the sparse golf courses in Scotland and the British Isles plus a few of them in this country, and those courses in our lush eastern and gulf states stand out like the difference between black and white. We realize that we have to put up with our winter season but if you were a member of a judging team judging golf courses for their natural

beauty, it is a foregone conclusion that the course with a goodly amount of trees on it would have a better chance of gaining the higher scores from the judges.

Design of the partitions

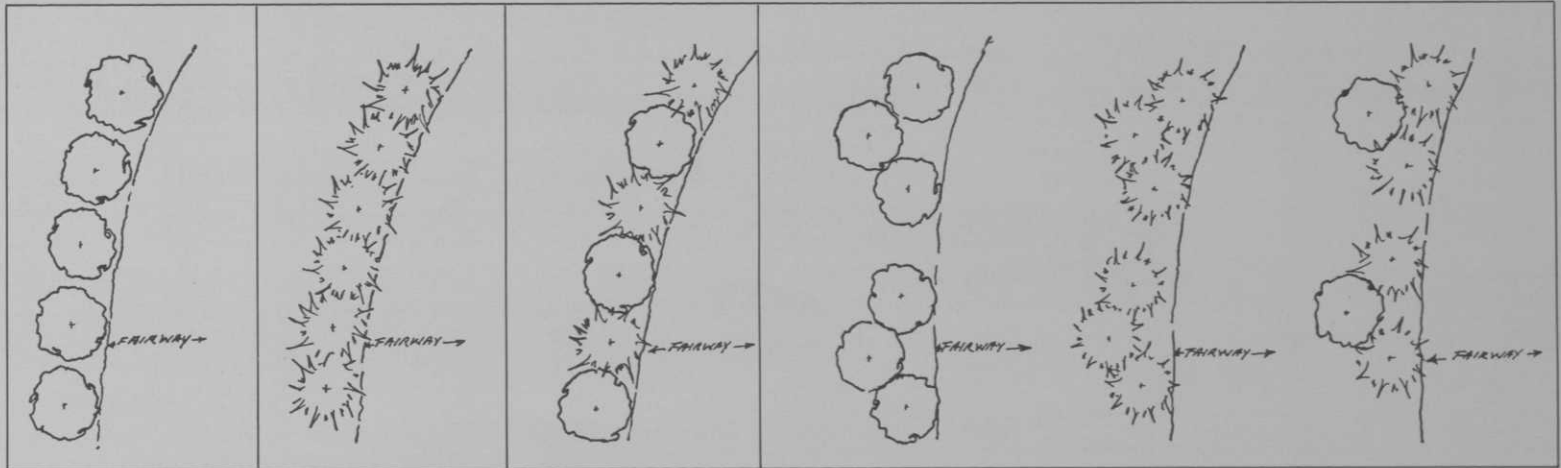
Naturally many courses in states where there are trees to start with are hacked out of forest areas. Other courses are started on open acreage and then landscaped with trees.

Some of the courses that are constructed in a wooded area have a feeling of age to them by the time play is started while others have been seriously impaired by the lack of knowledge or vision by those who made the decisions as to which trees to discard and which of those to keep. Therefore we will have to discuss both kinds or origins in this article to help you realize the full potential of the beauty to be had through the proper design of these partition plantings.

If we started with a bald 150 acres with all the fairways and greens and tees in place, we would have to make a decision as to which way we were going to go on the long range appearance of this course. We would

This wide partition (top) allows a view through to other parts of the course as well as a carpet of wildflowers. Partitions on both sides (bottom) give a sense of privacy.





Avoid using all deciduous trees in single line. It's too thin — unsafe.

Avoid using all evergreen trees in single line. Unnatural.

Avoid using alternate evergreen and deciduous trees. Unnatural.

Avoid unnatural grouping in equal triangles.

have to ask ourselves, are we going to try to make it look like it was chopped out of an existing wooded area or are we going to use every piece of knowledge and skill that we have learned and use both native and introduced trees to create these partitions so that in 20 or more years out ahead they will create a thing of true beauty.

Undoubtedly, the "mix" is the most logical answer. In other words, we could landscape a course with all native plants but then we would have to forego using some very attractive introduced trees. Also, if we were strictly staying with nature in some particular areas, every tree on the course would then be a cone-bearing or coniferous tree, such as the pines, spruces and hemlocks. Or in other areas they would all be deciduous trees such as maples, oaks and ash. Again, the mix seems to be the best solution.

We must be very careful, however, not to bring onto this scene of natural beauty trees that would stand out as sore thumbs even to the untrained eye. This is why you will have to do a lot of homework if you are going to tackle such a design problem yourselves.

First we must remember that each partition planting will have two sides to it as far as the observer or the golfer is concerned. This is the same as the interior walls of your home. Therefore, we must take into consideration the angle of the sun, the direction of the prevailing winds as well as the ultimate width of the partition planting when the trees are on their way to maturity or into maturity.

One of the most difficult things to avoid when hacking a golf course out of a solid wooded area is the straight wall-like effect of both the border

plantings and the partition plantings which are allowed to remain after the bulldozer has finished its work. This is another one of the three or four cardinal sins that we see as we travel from course to course.

The objective of the designer is to break up these straight lines in both cases. Whether you are starting from scratch or whether you are starting from a heavily wooded area to begin with, a curved edge partition is more natural, thus more desirable.

This is accomplished by having the courage to remove some trees that look almost too beautiful to be discarded. By doing this we can work in gentle curves facing the golfer as well as concealing curves ahead from the golfer, which adds interest to the hole as the player moves along.

As well as curving the partition edge naturally, complete breaks should be created in these plantings where the golfer's view can move uninhibited across to the adjoining hole, or several holes, thus, adding depth and perspective to the natural beauty of the course.

Also interest is created by adding promontories of particular trees or groups of trees sticking out so as to force a narrowing of the space in which the ball can fly. This would be all planned on paper if you were starting from a nude piece of land. Looking at the landscape plan on a drawing board, which is like looking with a birdseye view, it is relatively easy to avoid the straight wall-like partitions. It is a little more difficult to create them out of a solid wooded area. Again we are aware that every time you take an additional tree out it is adding to the cost of the initial construction. Probably this is the reason we see so many non-interesting or dull partition plantings.

Landscape designers and architects refer to certain types of plants as "accent plants". These are used to either break a monotonous silhouette created primarily from the trees left standing that are all the same height, or on barren areas where new plants must be added. These accent plants are used to add interest to the man-made composition. A good example of an accent plant would be the tall narrow form that we refer to as either fastigate or pyramidal or columnar.

Just having a group of tall trees with clean boles (trunks with no branches coming out) would look pretty much like a series of fence posts with very little interest. Therefore, to add interest we add what are known as "understory" trees. These are smaller growing trees and sometime large shrubs that have the natural ability to compete with larger trees without spoiling their general appearance and habit. Where dogwoods grow, this would be the prime example of an understory tree. If you are familiar with the *Viburnum prunifolium* (Blackhaw), that small tree/shrub would be the ideal example of a plant which would do well as an understory specimen.

Interest and composition can be added by selecting those trees that have a conspicuous bloom on them at certain times of the year. Here again you must know (1) what the color of the flowers would be, (2) what time of year will they be in bloom, and (3) do you use them as single specimens or do you mass them to get the best effect.

In addition to flowers, we can work interest into the partition plantings through the use of conspicuous colored bark on the trees. In this manner they can be of interest twelve months of the year. The classic example here, of course, would be the



A young pair of partition plantings (top) does not block the dramatic views to distant points off the course. Courses on windswept areas (right) have to do with a minimum of trees. Native plants are called for.



birches with their very bright gray or pure white bark.

It may seem strange but the knowledge beforehand of fall color of the foliage and deciduous plants is even more important than the flowers on a tree. (1) They usually last longer and, (2) they are more brilliant and spectacular because every leaf on the tree is in a state of unbelievable beauty.

Also, you must take into consideration the golfer, if he should hit a

You must ask yourself—does this tree naturally prune itself by dropping little twigs and branches throughout the growing season? A constant maintenance problem would be created by having to pick them up. Anyone who has ever lived in an area where ice storms are a thing to live with knows that certain types of trees on your course can withstand these ice storms, while others are literally ripped to shreds. This must be known again in making your selections. Some trees can stand the high winds of a hurricane season, while others don't have a chance. The problem of pruning these trees over the long run becomes tremendously important. In the areas of the country where the Pin Oak grows, anyone who has to live with them over a long period of years will come to his own conclusion (he will not have to hear some professor tell him this) that this is one of the high maintenance trees even though it is a very valuable tree on a golf course. If you have never climbed into a Pin Oak tree and cut out some branches and then tried to get them down to the ground, then you really haven't experienced frustration.

ball under or near one of these smaller growing trees. Some multitrunked species, and those which have branches to the ground constitute an unfair hazard for the player.

Minimum maintenance is desirable.

When new trees are decided upon for these partition plantings, the designer, whoever he may be, must have a vision of the minimum twenty years down the road. These trees will be here perhaps as long as the golf course remains. Therefore, maintenance of these trees should be one of the most important factors in his decisions when he makes his selections of trees.

Such items to be considered include the type of foliage in relation to damage to the turf when they drop to the ground in the fall. The larger or the flatter they are, the more danger they can be to your grass. If you can't get out there and rake them up almost on a daily basis, especially if you get caught in a wet spell, the more possible damage will occur to your fine turf.

You must know what kind of seeds or fruit these trees will set in relation to your greens, tees, fairways and the roughs. You must also know what this fruit lying on the ground would do to the game of golf since there are certain rules that the golfer must follow in relation to impediments around his ball.

Disease can be deadly.

Not enough can be said on the importance of the ability of trees that you select to withstand the onslaughts of diseases and insects. This can be the undoing of many trees as it was in the process of doing in the 70's on the East coast with the Austrian pine, (*Pinus nigra*). Not only golf courses, but our home grounds, our parks, our highway plantings, are suffering severely from the effects of the airborne disease Diplodia. The question here would be, do you want to plant such a tree that will die in the next generation, or do you cross them off your list and use other conifers that are able to continue their normal life span. Not only is knowledge and timely application of preventive treatments necessary, but wise tree selection is also helpful. In addition, the approach of keeping diversity of species in the partition plantings is a good one to follow. Then, even if a disease should hit specific trees, it will not be able to wipe out an entire planting, as has happened in the past.

Perhaps in summation, we might again go back to the comparison of the inner walls of your house to the partition planting on your golf course and ask you to imagine every wall in your house to be completely blank. This would mean no pictures, no draperies, no shelves, nothing.





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