

Landscaping the green: Part II

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Spacing a must

The fact that these plants will increase in size for many years makes it absolutely necessary for knowledge spacing in the beginning. Overcrowding a planting to make an immediate effect is a very successful sales technique of those who have little true concern for the long range health and beauty of the course. To create a landscape for long-lasting beauty, restraint should be an essential element in the initial plan. Correct spacing, therefore, becomes one of many crucial requirements for a pleasing composition.

If we plant trees too close to one another, two things will happen. For the impatient person, it will look wonderful even at the very day of planting. However, in only a few years, one tree will grow into the other and each will lose its own identity. A solid uninteresting wall of foliage will form with no beauty to it whatsoever. If we wanted this screen effect, all we would have needed would be a double row of the same plant (Privet as a classic example) and presto — the visual barrier would be there. However, this is not what we want behind most greens.

The other choice we have is to carefully select our trees and then space them for long range results. This means giving them sufficient room to develop as individuals, to their full potential of natural beauty. As they grow larger, the total arrangement will begin to merge into an organized design.

Proper plant selections and arrangements are two more important ingredients of composition. A classic ex-

ample of the importance of selection is obvious to any golfer who tries to putt on a green covered with seed pods, fruit, nuts, flowers, tiny twigs, etc., etc. which come from trees growing near the green. The maple seeds (samara) are perhaps the classic example of this common mistake.

The cheapest is not the best

Since maples are cheap to buy (or collect for free) and they are easily transplanted, we find them on nearly every course we visit. Maples in the rough or in the partition plantings are acceptable — but not near the green. In fact, the whirling seeds much like helicopter blades, can be windblown for a hundred yards or more very easily. Ash seeds are just as bad. Fortunately, plant breeders have come up with seedless ash trees, — now let us hope they can do the same with the maples!

Individualism amongst trees

Each genus and many species of trees have unique habits of growth. These are taken into account when you design a planting that will give the golf green a spectacular setting. As an example, a palm tree simply does not grow with the same habit or structure as that of an ash, hemlock, or a dogwood.

In order to avoid a monotonous wall of foliage which would result if you simply jammed a bunch of say, maples, together behind a green, we "compose" a much more pleasant picture by using a variety of trees whose sum total would be an attractive "painting" someday when they reach the early maturity stage.

We very often can take our lessons

from nature. In the Eastern U.S., we frequently see native flowering trees (dogwood, redbud, shadblow) growing in beautiful harmony along with the Eastern red cedar, American holly, hemlocks, pines, spruces, and/or firs.

We can, if we know what we are doing, arrange many such compatible groupings as extremely attractive backdrops for the golf green. The evergreens not only create a dark background for the flowers on the deciduous trees but they also give a year-round look of life to those golf courses in the colder climates where winter golf is played.

In fact, the shrewd designer arrives at a pleasing composition by choosing different colors of evergreens. The "greens" of the so-called "evergreens" are not all the same color. Some are almost black when seen from a distance, others are a light green, blue-green, gray-green, and some downright blue. The Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') and Koster's blue spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Kosteri') are two fine examples. They are a bright blue, especially when the new growth is still young.

By adding a selection of deciduous trees to the evergreens, it is easy to see why these plants can be used to make colorful (and ever-changing) compositions just as the artist employs his array of colored paints.

Structural variety

The many different growth habits or structural differences found in the world of trees also helps in the process of creating a composition of interest and beauty.

Horizontally Tiered

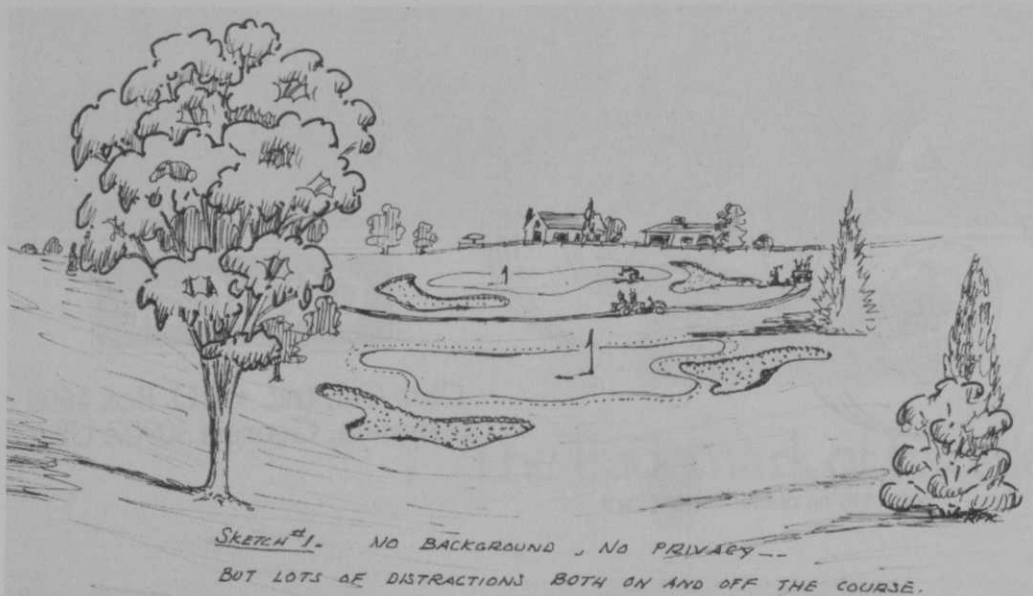
Prime examples are the horizontally tiered trees such as the various pines, the dogwood trees, and the sourgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*).

"Needles in the Skyline"

The tall spikes that pierce the skyline rockets on the launching pad are typified by the cryptomerias, arborvitae, the upright junipers, and many fastigiate forms of a dozen or more deciduous trees.

Weepers

The graceful weeping branches of many willows, cherries, weeping beeches, etc., etc., add still another effect to the completed composition.



Geometric forms

Then there are the trees that grow naturally into very rigid geometric shapes such as pyramids, upright rectangles, round crowned trees, "lollipops," and the multistemmed (trunks) of the "see-through" type.

Picturesque

Add to these forms, the picturesque habits of such items as the Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergiana*), maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and the "artist" now has many colors of "paints" go work with while he mentally creates an enduring "canvas" that will never look the same from year to year.

There should be a perfect balance of color, form, height, depth and texture, in each background planting. Fortunately, no two will ever have to be identical.

If at all possible, these plantings should blend in with and echo the rest of the trees on and around the course. However, occasionally, for a dramatic effect, an "outsider," so to speak, is used to catch the viewer's attention. This would be a focal point. The most recent addition to such a list is the dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). Here we have a living fossil (ginkgo is one too) that seems to be perfectly at home in many of our 48 states. It grows very rapidly, is an "accent" plant, bends to the breezes, has very refined foliage, good fall color, and when it loses its leaves, exposes an interesting branching habit. With such variety at our disposal, there is no end to the individuality that can be built into these background plantings.

Balance the picture on sloped terrain

Frequently, on hilly land, we see a green located on a hillside. The lay of the land is such that there is high land to one side of the green as we approach it, and a steep dropoff to low land on the other side. It looks to be off balance. By a judicious selection of trees, the designer can offset this uphill, downhill appearance and when the trees mature, much of the feeling of an imbalance will have disappeared.

Simply place taller growing forms on the lower side and use low growing, almost mound form on the high side. This would be a great situation wherein we could employ the dawn redwood and spruces and other tall, narrow types on the low side. Use medium height trees in the rear and then try items such as dogwood, hawthorns, and Japanese snowbells (*Styrax japonica*) on the high land.



Sometimes only one large specimen on the low side will create a feeling of balance.

Keep the golfer in mind

Great care must be taken when creating these background plantings. (They really should be called "setting" plantings since very often they also include the two side areas as well as the rear area.) Try **never** to use plants whose beauty depends upon the lower branches touching the ground, such as a beech tree, spruce, or fir tree. This would be unfair to the golfer whose ball missed the green and rolled under such a plant. If the space is rather tight around the green then make certain that all trees are of such nature that a ball could be punched or rolled back onto some part of the green in a stroke.

Another danger in placing trees too close to the putting surface is that of root systems growing into the green itself in "search" of water and nutrients. So keep your distance. If the space is not there, maybe a planting that's actually a part of another golf hole could be made to **appear** to be the backdrop for such a green. With sound horticultural knowledge, and understanding of the game of golf, and a good imagination, almost any landscape problem can be solved in a satisfactory manner.

Shadows

Speaking of imagination brings us to the next thought concerning these green plantings, namely, shadows. The long, graceful shadows cast by tall, narrow trees early in the morning and then again at the end of the day very often are the result of some of the finest type of creative thinking of the landscape architect. By taking into account the points of the compass, very often this most refined touch in landscape design can be applied to

certain golf greens. It is best used when the green becomes visible from above. In country where the land forms have provided a pleasant undulation to the fairways, we frequently approach the green from a considerably higher elevation. Those are the greens that can be dramatically beautiful when the long, narrow, shadows lay upon the green. Try it. You'll be amazed at the result.

Safety too

The plantings around the greens also add a margin of safety to the golfers in many instances. Almost every course, no matter what the acreage is, usually has at least one tight spot between green and tee or tee and green. Often parts of three or four holes are exposed around a green and these plantings can serve several purposes under such circumstances.

Shrubs not good

We can almost say **never** use shrubbery as part of a background planting for a green. The exception would be where the shrubs were at least 100 feet beyond the back edge of the green. Just as we caution against the low branched trees, we feel flowering shrubs or needled evergreen shrubs should be banned from any area of play.

Conversation Piece

We all know that the game of golf can and certainly is played on treeless courses. This, however, is due to the climate in certain parts of the world. We speak here, however, of those courses that are able to successfully support trees with little or no special care. Background plantings are a refinement as well as a playing aid. They add quality to the course, and "finish" an otherwise well-landscaped hole. If **very** well landscaped, they can be a "conversation piece." (See Sketch #3 — an ideal green background at maturity.)