

# New concepts for landscaping tees

By J. A. French and R. P. Korbobo

Part I of this article appeared in the August, 1980, issue of GOLF BUSINESS. The photographs which appear here in black and white, also appeared in the August article in color. They should be referred to for a full appreciation of the beauty of the tees the authors speak of. They are arranged here, in black and white, to afford continuity to this second part. Ed.

## Change of life style

Another reason for this change in tastes you can probably count along with others is a subtle change in our living habits. More and more former home owners, young married couples, single people, etc., live in apartments, townhouses, or condominiums. They

no longer own "their own little plot of land" and grow and enjoy their own flowers, grass and vegetables. The golf course gives them that wonderful feeling of open space and of walking on beautiful green grass. In addition, they don't even have to maintain it! So it is not only the fact that more women are playing golf that is causing this change in attitude, but a change in our living habits as well. So the alert owners of golf courses are catching on to the importance of "eye appeal" through attractive landscaping that will literally surround the golfer in beauty.

## When? How?

Now that we have covered the reasons in favor of such improvements to a course, let us get down to the **when** and **how** part of it.

To be sure, every 1st tee is not an eyesore as we have described in our example. Therefore, some qualified person or committee should take a close and detailed look at their 1st tee in particular. Is it clean? Is it functional? Is it attractive? Could it be improved? Can you see the cars in a parking lot as you stand on or near the tee? Are there mud holes after it rains? Are there foot paths wearing out the turf where the players approach the tees indicating that you may not have solved the foot and car circulation problems? Perhaps the most effective method of looking at your own "home base," to see it as a stranger sees it, is to take several slides of it during the various seasons and then project them — lifesize onto a screen. (This method is better than using the instant picture type of photos since the prints are so small, you can't see all the negative aspects in detail which the area may have.)

It could be that your tee in question is a diamond in the rough (no pun intended). Just a little cosmetic landscape work could do wonders.

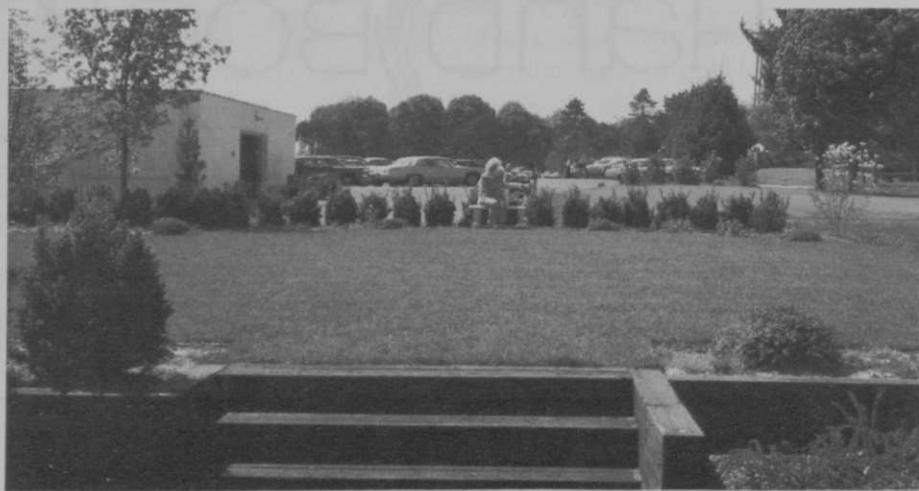
The photographs in this article show just such a case. The tee was just a mound of grass surrounded by blacktop. In fact, they had ceased using it as a tee. It was flush with the paving at the back of the tee with sloped grass areas on the sides and front around which the electric carts were parked.

One could look from the main entrance of the clubhouse, across this tee into a sea of parked cars. Now, just four years after planting and construction were complete, it matches any 1st tee in the country from the golfing and aesthetic point of view. It is affectionately referred to by the proud owners and the home pros as the "Tee Garden."

Pressure treated 6"x6" timbers were used for the steps and retaining walls and 2"x8" redwood boards were used for the permanent edging of the flower beds. This very special tee is once again used during key tournaments such as the LPGA and the State PGA Finals.

The every day tee has also been

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Top, this first championship tee at Forsgate CC in Jamestown, N.J., fell into disuse for 20 some years. The same tee, two years later (bottom), shows immediately the value of landscaping.

## Tees from page 28

improved with the addition of attractive steps, split rail fencing and colorful flower beds.

The raised planting beds were created by the use of 6" x 6" pressure-treated timbers, which not only create areas for colorful flowers, but control traffic on and off the tee.

There is no denying that this work would cost a few dollars. But as each year passes it becomes obvious to all concerned that it was a very wise in-

vestment indeed.

#### Maintenance

Since it is very close to being a formal design, the size and shape are permanent. All of the planting beds are edged with redwood boards or 6" x 6" timbers. This means minimum maintenance is required in order for the design to hold its shape.

The clipped hedges serve two purposes. One side will be kept at 5 feet in height. This will protect the annual

year for spring flowering bulbs and fall blooming Mums.

Of course, in the warmer climates the display of flowers could be a continuous "spectacular" as the TV people might put it.

It goes without any argument that the final design for any such tee landscape must be appropriate not only to the geographic area of the country but to the local scene as well. As one example, we might picture a clubhouse of colonial architecture with a pro shop done in modern modular design as is often the case today. In this instance, a landscaped waiting area or 1st tee area can act as a buffer between the two different kinds of architecture as well as providing a pleasant outlook for the golfer.

#### Angles

If the tee planting is informal and uncomplicated, a most important fact to keep in mind is ease of mowing the grass. Should planting beds be a part of it, try to design their outlines in such a manner as to allow a free continuous movement of the mowing machines. If geometric angles are involved, keep them at least 90 degrees. Anything less will mean too much hard trimming to keep it maintained easily.

#### Slopes

Avoid open planting beds on sloped land. This invites soil erosion problems. Build retaining walls in order to have flat beds.

#### Hedges or Screen Plantings

There are times when clipped hedges can be used to great advantage at certain tees. They can act as a windbreak on the one hand and also as a safety barrier for flying golf balls in a tight area on the course.

Hedges can also solve the visual problem when a tee and a green are so close to each other that there is no space for tree plantings. Care must be taken in selecting the type of plant for these hedges. Some, such as the California Privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) have such vigorous root systems so as to create a health hazard to the fine turf on the tee. In such instances a shield to act as a barrier to the roots will be in order. This would be placed at the tee side of the planting ditch.

Care should also be taken to place the hedge informally (staggered) so that it does not look too rigid in an otherwise natural scene.

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*In the photograph above, a screen planting of hemlocks blocks a view into a dusty service road and acts as a windbreak. Below, retaining walls mean a higher cost per tee, but the beauty is worth it.*



flowers from the persistent west winds, and at the same time screen out an entire parking lot. No cars will be visible. The remainder of the hedge will be kept at about 3 feet high for design purposes only.

The personnel in the pro shop can see right through the "garden" out to the very active (and landscaped) usual first tee and up the 1st fairway.

The major work required to keep this beautiful tee in fine condition is to prepare the annual flower bed areas,

planting the annuals and keeping the bed clean cultivated after each major rainfall.

This takes care of weeding and eliminates the need for a mulch. The Japanese Yew hedge needs only an annual shearing in early July. Naturally, the fine turf (bentgrass) has to be cared for as usual.

This keeps annual cost and maintenance to a minimum. If you cared to extend the blooming season, it might cost you a small amount more each

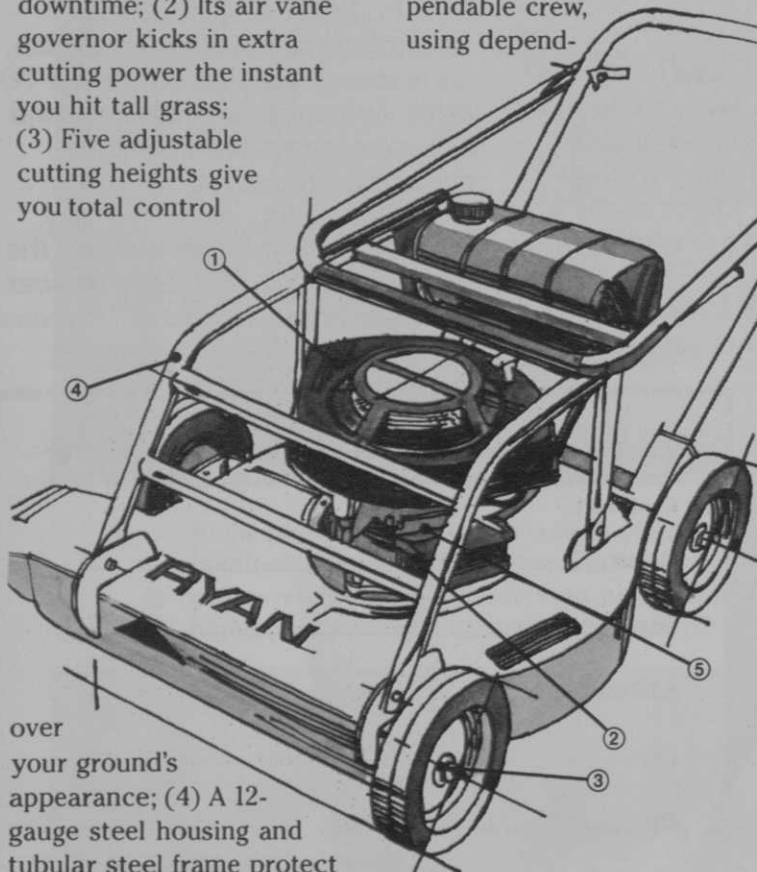
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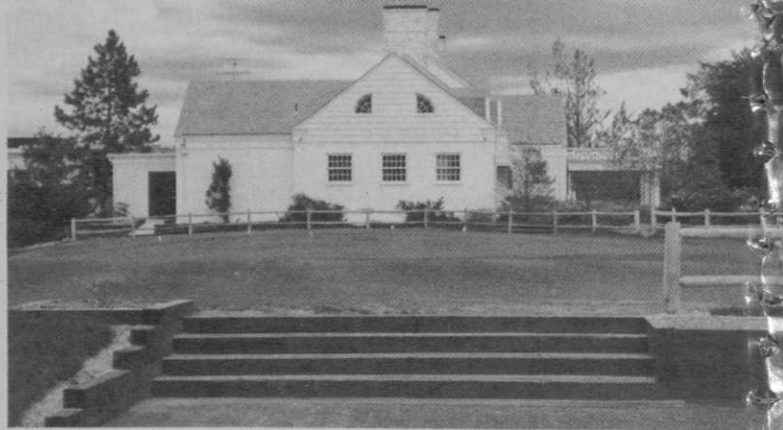
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Tees from page 32



Top, if steps are not of the right design proportions, golfers will not use them and a worn area will develop to either side. Bottom, this is another view of the tee at Faragote from the practice green.

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### Double tees

Ocasionally, we come upon a double tee serving two different holes. Try to make these tees wide enough to support a divider planting of small trees and shrubs. Flowers could be used in the planting bed spaces to add even more interest.

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### Avoid large trees when planting to divide double tees serving two holes.

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Avoid large trees in these plantings because of their large root systems. Such plantings also add to the safety factor. Beginners can easily "heel" a tee shot at almost right angles to the intended line of flight. Golfers on double tees, separated by plantings, would be much safer from such accidental shots.

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### Golfers will be safer from accidental 'heel' shots by divider plantings on double tees.

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### Shade on or near tees

When the sun is high in the sky a bit of shade on or near a tee is truly a welcomed gift. If you have the space to spare, a large shade tree can be strategically located so that even though the tree trunk is a good distance from the tee, the shade will be on it. This is the ideal way to have your cake and eat it too.

If such space is not available on your course then you resort to a smaller tree and place a bench under it. It can be a distance from the tee if need be. In case of a back-up of players, they can wait their turn in the cool shade of such a tree. These smaller trees can very often be flowering types to add a seasonal touch of color to that area.

### Elevated tees

In hilly country, many of the tees must be surrounded on one or more sides with retaining walls or large sloped grassed areas. This change in elevations means higher costs per tee, but they also lend themselves to some really attractive solutions.

In New England and other locations where rocks and boulders abound in every direction, we have seen some really beautiful rock retaining walls holding up the tees. Very often natural wild flowers and vines will manage to grow on their own in such "dry walls".

If the height is much over 4 feet then two or more walls should be designed with a level planting bed between them. Flowers in these "planters" could really make spectacular summer scenes around the course.

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### If over four feet, two walls should be designed with a level planting bed between.

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Pressure treated timbers (real railroad ties are hard to find anymore) are also very useful for this work. Be certain **not** to try to save money by using "dipped" timbers. In rainy country these "bargains" will decay in a very few years. Costs of rebuilding such walls will be high. Better not to do it if it can't be done right in the first place.

### Steps

If steps are required to approach or leave the elevated tee, then heed these words. If steps are not of the correct design proportions, the golfers will not use them except for the first couple of times.

Poor design results in steps that are out of proportion. A good rule to follow is that the sum total of inches of both the tread and the riser shall equal between 18 and 22 inches.

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### Comfortable steps should have risers (vertical height) of five to six inches. The tread (horizontal) would then be from 12 to 16 inches deep.

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Not only do these figures conform to most human body movements but it will also allow a person with a hand-drawn bag cart to pull it up and allow it to precede him on the way down.

If there are more than eight steps required, then a landing should be designed into them to give a "breather" on the way up. These landings very frequently should also be a turning point for the change in the direction of the steps that will follow.

If you have tee steps on your course

and the golfers have worn a path on either side of them, check the design measurements of riser and tread. Often you will be surprised to find risers that are eight or more inches high and treads that are from 2 to 3 feet deep. These steps simply will never be used as they were intended.

### High tees

If your tee surface is supported by retaining walls then there is the ever-present danger of a golfer falling over the edge. This is another sound reason to have fences, hedges or flower beds along the edges of such areas. If you are a golfer yourself you know how easy it would be to step off during a period of intense concentration.

While we are on the subject of tees, all too often we see tees that are not aligned correctly with the center of the fairway. If you intend to dress up such a tee you might also consider a realignment job of the front line of the tee as a part of the new design.

We hope you don't get the impression that we are suggesting you landscape every tee on your course. Rarely will that be the case. However, each course can stand some improvement or at least the 1st and 10th tee. Just which tees should be so treated can be decided by a grounds committee. Also in some instances, we know of Superintendents who have the expertise and the interest who might decide to take the lead themselves in suggesting such innovative ideas for the improvement of the course.

The safest way for good design would be to hire a landscape designer or landscape architect. Design is their business and they know the plant material that will flourish in your area.

If the club can afford it, a landscape contractor can execute the job. If you, as a Superintendent, feel that your own labor force could plant it in a professional manner, than go ahead. The drawback to such an approach is the fact that these jobs come during your most busy work season.

If money is a factor, you can do the work in stages or start with very small plants. Also, it is suggested that you delegate special people on your labor force the responsibility for the careful maintenance of such landscaped areas.

This is one work effort that will give spectacular results (and long-lasting too) for a relatively small investment. Why don't you try it? **GB**