

EFFECTIVE PLACEMENT OF NEW TREES ON THE GOLF COURSE

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The reasons for planting trees on a golf course may be quite varied. The course may be new, with all or portions constructed in open areas, or there may have been plant material losses from such things as storm damage, dutch elm disease or similar factors. A third possibility is that many courses exist which have simply never budgeted for a tree planting program even though the need has existed for some years. There is really no site that has perfect trees for every fairway.

Whatever the needs, there are five primary criteria for placement of additional trees. They are:

1. For protection and safety.
2. To make the course "read" - such as defining fairways, backdropping greens, turning doglegs, etc. These are visual placements and provide scale and depth perception as well.
3. Creating hazard or changing playing characteristics.
4. Marking distances on fairways.
5. Screening views or enframing views.

Tree locations may be designated into the golf course in a number of locations for the above purposes. Analysis of play and of possible errant golf shots will show where trees can be located to protect a tee or green from a sliced or hooked ball or an overshoot. Placement between fairways in general landing areas or slightly off the tee can protect adjacent fairways from a badly sliced ball by catching the ball in the leaf and branch structure.

Proper design can often make tree locations serve more than one purpose. Protective plantings around a green can also backdrop the green which aids in making it "read" from the tee or fairway. Fairway plantings also define a golf hole, particularly a dogleg, and tell the golfer on the tee how that fairway plays. A large open area of parallel fairways is often confusing to the golfer. Trees aid in making each hole "read" individually in both direction and scale and help the golfer to judge distances during play.

Another use for trees is to locate them in a manner which brings them into play in strategic locations. For example, reinforcing the turning point in a dogleg hole in a position which will provide a golfer the choice of carrying a shot over the trees for a more advantageous lie or playing it safe around the trees. A short, easy hole can be made more difficult by encroaching from both sides of the fairway near the green, requiring a more accurate approach shot. A tree can also take the place of a fairway bunker by placement in the edge of the fairway to provide some hazard and is much less expensive to maintain than sand.

Marking distances is another use of trees, and 150 yard markers are planted in the edge of the fairway to aid golfers in judging distance. Specimens should be used which vary from the native trees on the site so that they will stand out by contrast, either by foliage or bark color, or by shape.

Lastly, general landscape use of trees can be made to screen out a service yard or perimeter land use, to provide shade and setting for the clubhouse, to enframe good views and screen out bad ones.

Some do's and don'ts for planting:

1. Never plant trees closer than 20 to 25 feet on centers to facilitate easy maintenance with gang mowers.
2. Plant in odd number groupings such as 3 or 5 in a natural non-row pattern.
3. Never plant in a straight line down the rough. Nature abhors a straight line (it is man's design) and a golf course should augment and enhance nature, not fight her.
4. Beware of establishing too much foliage around a green, particularly low level foliage. It can inhibit air movement, resulting in turf problems on your greens.
5. Don't use low branching material or trees with thorns. Golfers may be able to avoid them but your mower operators will have to wear a suit of armor.
6. Use trees with moderate to small leaf size to minimize leaf removal problems and also species which do not drop fruit, seed pods, branches, or which are extremely susceptible to storm damage.
7. Use trees which provide a large mass of foliage in relatively few growing years. Too many small evergreens will not have much visual impact. Use them only for accent, variety, or screening.
8. A large scale planting program can be costly. Have a Master Planting Plan prepared and set up an annual budget for phase planting, setting a priority for each year's work. It is surprising how rapidly you will achieve your goal as each phase adds up to a better and more beautiful course.