

TREES AND YOU

Let's take a break from turf and examine another group of plants used on the golf course, TREES. Through the season, we spend most of our time looking down at our turf very carefully examining the root and leaves. Let's take a moment to look up and examine our trees.

Trees play an integral part of the golf course in design, function and aesthetics. Due to their important roles golf course superintendents should expand their awareness of trees on the golf course. This awareness may extend to the impact that trees not only have on the course, but on the environment. Trees play an important ecological role by removing carbon dioxide and cooling the environment. This has been recognized by the American Forestry Association which has recently initiated Global Releaf and has a goal of planting 200 million trees by 1992 in an effort to deal with environmental problems and global warming. Global Releaf is supported by many national organizations.

TREES AND THE GOLF COURSE

Trees provide several functions on the course. Most importantly trees provide a visual frame for the fairway and a background for the green. They also create interest as the golfer may need to strategically play around a tree. Trees are an integral part of the game as well as the aesthetics of the landscapes and sometimes good places to sit in the shade.

These roles played by trees are also important reasons to treat trees with respect. Remember, the golf course is a system - a collection of microenvironments that are intensely managed. Trees are a part of the system and need to be included in the overall maintenance program of the course. Trees on the course become an asset to the course.

Tree care is an investment. Not all superintendent courses can afford to allocate a part of the budget to maintain trees. A good part of tree care is common sense. Understanding the basics of a tree as a system, how it grows and proper maintenance procedures is important to establishing a tree care program. Many trees maintenance

activities may be achieved during the off season, and time may more easily be allocated toward tree care.

Knowing some basic facts about trees may help you establish a very simple tree care program. Many times, tree maintenance comes through preventing problems in the first place. Some things to remember:

The root system is the most important part of a tree. Without healthy roots the top is sure to suffer.

Tree roots extend upward and outward far beyond the drip line. Roots may cover 2-4 times the area of the crown.

Tree roots need oxygen. Any activity interfering with oxygen diffusion into the soil is harmful to the root system.

Most of the root system is located in the upper 12 inches of the soil. Many roots grow near the soil surface where oxygen levels are highest. Never grade soil over the root system and never grade soil away from the root system.

Any injury or extensive wounding of the roots or crown may provide easy access for pathogens.

Building "wells" around the trees for the purpose of changing grades most often does not work.

Trenching under trees is harmful. Proper distances should be followed to minimize damage.

The crowns of the tree should be treated with the same respect as the root system. Minimize wounding, follow proper pruning techniques and avoiding any mechanical damage is prudent. Remove dead wood and poorly formed branches before they can lead to greater problems.

If in doubt, don't do it, call a professional for advice. Common sense is the best approach to tree management.

Credit: "The Gateway Green", Mississippi Valley GCSA newsletter, Spring 1990

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Timothy Johnson, Pebble Beach GC

Affiliate

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