



## The Problem With Tree Roots

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I've always understood tree roots to extend to a tree's drip line, but now my golf course superintendent tells me that tree roots are much more extensive (and problematic to turf) than I ever realized. Can you explain?

Golfers generally seem to understand (or have been made aware) that tree root systems aggressively compete with turfgrasses for available water and nutrients, and that trees often lead to poor turf performance. Few, however, understand the extent of a tree's root system. Most assume (using the analogy of a wineglass to represent a tree) that the base of the wineglass characterizes a tree's root system. Not so. In actuality, a wineglass placed on a dinner plate is a more accurate



representation. A tree's root system does not end at the drip line as many believe; rather, it typically extends outward from a tree equidistant to its height. Furthermore, a tree's root system is generally confined to the upper 8 to 12 inches of the soil which coincidentally is the same rootzone that turfgrasses occupy. This emphasizes the importance of root pruning to sever tree root systems in intensively managed turfgrass areas and, even more so, the importance of tree removal to completely disable root competition.

With a better understanding of the far-reaching effects of tree roots, hopefully this will help guide tree maintenance decisions at your golf facility. As turf managers are well aware, successfully managing trees on the course produces better turf for better golf.

For more information and to better understand the full impact of trees as it relates to turf performance, please see the short video [Trees on the Golf Course](#).

