



Winter Sun

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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December is a great time to identify and document potential winter shade problems, especially around greens and tees. You won't experience shade patterns caused by low sun angles any other time of the year. While evergreen trees cause shade all year, never discount the impact of shade caused by the trunks, limbs and branches of deciduous trees that have lost their leaves.

Sites that are heavily shaded during the winter generally accumulate the most snow and ice cover. Snow cover is beneficial, but prolonged periods of ice cover put turf at risk of winterkill, especially at courses where the playing surfaces possess a high percentage of *Poa annua*. Furthermore, without sunlight to help melt it, ice cover that develops in shaded areas is very difficult to remove during a midwinter thaw.



Evergreen trees are troublesome, shading turf all year. Winter shade increases the chance of winter injury by weakening turf and extending periods of ice cover.

Winter shade can also affect the bottom line of a golf facility. Shaded holes that hold ice and snow late into spring are often the limiting factor that prevents a course from opening for play. The revenue lost due to a late opening will be very difficult to recover later in the season.

Those who make decisions regarding tree removals on a golf course usually need plenty of convincing evidence before they authorize action. Images of winter shade issues can be just as valuable as images of summer shade patterns, though a bit more challenging to acquire. Sun angles can be so low during winter that it is difficult to take a picture without significant glare. Furthermore, moving around a golf course in heavy snow is challenging and frigid temperatures will rapidly sap the life from your phone or camera batteries. There is nothing worse than braving a wind chill to reach a remote area of the property only to have your camera die after taking one or two images. Needless to say, always keep your camera as warm as possible in an inside pocket. Also, take multiple pictures from multiple angles. There won't be many winter days with full sun and nobody wants to freeze twice.

A good picture is still worth a thousand words, so take the time during these shortest days of the year to build a strong case for removing problem trees.

Safe and happy holidays to all.

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