

Arne van Amerongen, supervisor for the Golf Course Architect Peter Harradine, gives his views on the use of wood chips on golf courses...

You've had your Chips



One of the worst innovations in recent years has been the use of wood chippings to combat mud on paths, walk-offs from tees and between green and tees.

Wood chips are a menace to both greenkeeping and play. They damage mowers, become trapped in between spikes and delay play while golfers dislodge them.

They also get carried round the course and even onto greens, especially where they are used around seats, bins, etc.

It is not as if there are no alternatives ranging from crushed shell, where available, to gravel and crushed stone (if retained between edging timber) and even to sphagnum peat (not without its own problems).

A far better method than trying to improve muddy paths once the damage is done, is to create alternative paths from greens to the next tee, so that when wear starts to create mud, one path is closed and the other opened.

This also spreads wear on the green, especially if two trolley parks are provided, one at each side of the green, each clearly marked when closed, with an appropriate notice to the side of the approach.

Players will then hopefully leave their trolleys in the appropriate park (not covered in wood chippings) and walk

to their ball, thus avoiding traffic to and from across the front of the green.

Turfing to repair damage will not solve the problem on its own, but good wiry fibrous turf, if periodically rested by alternate closure should survive the winter.

One tip in looking after them is not to mow too closely eg. keep at semi-rough height 32-35 mm and of course aerate them regularly with the fairways and approaches.

Quite apart from being an unacceptable nuisance and irritation, wood chippings are aesthetically unattractive.

One big problem with paths is to decide between making them wide enough to take two trolleys line abreast against creating conspicuous scars.

If surfacing materials are disapproved of by golfers they merely walk on the grass alongside, so some barrier to pulling trolleys along verges if not walking on them must be devised. This can be done by contouring, by planting scrub or even constructing cross barriers (traffic calmers!) at intervals.

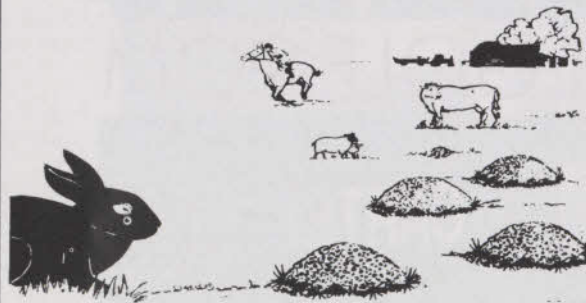
Above: Wood chips can create an untidy appearance

Below: Those chips again, this time making a mess around signage systems



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