

Talking Heads

Melissa Toombs quizzes greenkeepers across the UK and abroad on how they go about landscaping their golf courses.

1. How much landscaping/gardening are you expected to do at your club?
2. Do you devote specific time in your schedule to carry out this work?
3. Do you have the knowledge and skills that you need to carry out these tasks yourself, or do you have a dedicated gardener?
4. Which one landscaping project at your club are you particularly proud of?
5. How important do you think a well-landscaped golf club should be?

Answers:



Name: **John Clarke**
 Club: **Marriott Hanbury Manor Hotel & Country Club, Ware**
 Position: **Golf & Estate Manager**

1. Hanbury Manor has approximately 25 acres of historic gardens, lawns and pineatum.

2. Our Head Groundsman is responsible for all landscaped areas. He has dedicated staff and the assistance of the golf course crew.

3. The management and skills for maintenance and development are contained within the team, we use a local consultant for specific plant knowledge, professional arborists and a specialist in the maintenance of listed constructions for our walled gardens and terraces.

4. A large, hard landscaping project at the 1st tee. This included new walkways, lawns, features and a large Rhododendron bed to provide a much better sense of arrival.

5. Hugely important, the landscaping at the main entrance is the first impression any customer receives to our venue and will set the tone for their stay.



Name: **David MacIndoe**
 Club: **Killarney GC, Ireland**
 Position: **Course Manager**

1. We often undertake projects to enhance our very natural setting - Mainly through the quieter winter months.

2. I have one designated staff member to keep the clubhouse environs neat and tidy. When necessary other staff are allocated on an as needed basis.

3. My staff are multi-talented!

4. My staff and I turned an ugly drainage ditch on the 18th hole of our Killeen course into a series of ponds which also improve the visual and playing characteristics of the hole.

5. I personally feel that there is far too much emphasis on tree planting without regard to drainage, shade and air movement. I like to see the grass!



Name: **David Chapel**
 Club: **Rotherham GC**
 Position: **Course Manager**

1. We do quite a lot of landscaping through the autumn and winter months i.e. new winter tees plus improving summer tees, and also general work in wooded areas.

2. All work is assessed and a specific time is allowed to do the tasks.

3. All Staff are NVQ 3 trained plus have many years of experience in landscaping and gardening.

4. For the Golf Club's Centenary in 2003, two new ponds were constructed along with a fountain and water features.

5. It is very important for the purpose, as to make it pleasing to the eye and to add to the pleasure of a round of golf here at Rotherham Golf Club.

Name: **Bob Ehrler**
 Club: **Town of Huntington, New York**
 Position: **Director of Golf Course Maintenance**



1. At one of my golf courses (Dix Hills Golf Course in Dix Hills, Long Island), we will be implementing a major renovation. We anticipate a sizeable amount of landscaping work around the clubhouse, parking fields, and related support areas, such as the maintenance facility, wash pad area, and tee surrounds.

2. I personally don't do the physical work; however I oversee all work to ensure it's being performed properly, within budget and schedule. We have a competent staff that does the horticulture work.

3. I have an extensive education in landscape design, agronomy, turfgrass management and turfgrass science. My academic credentials are: B.S. in Turfgrass Science (high honors) from Penn State University; Graduated Rutgers University Two-Year Turfgrass Management Program – covering landscape design and horticulture; Masters Certificate from Penn State University in Turfgrass Science; Certified Turfgrass Professional (CTP) designation from the University of Georgia for cool and warm-season turfgrass management.

4. We recently completed a \$1,200,000 renovation project at Crab Meadow Golf Course in Northport, Long Island that consisted of designing new tees, bunkers and greens complexes and installing an automated irrigation system. The tee surrounds, clubhouse and parking areas were extensively landscaped, to arrive at an aesthetic, functional landscape.

5. Landscaping should be an integral part of golf course design or renovation project. Landscaping adds colour, form and function to the golf course project.

Name **Tom Murray**
 Club: **Ratho Park, Edinburgh**
 Position: **Head Greenkeeper**



1. The landscaping/gardening that is done at Ratho is carried out by the greenstaff who have all been trained at Oatridge College within the SVQ level in shrub and landscape maintenance. The greenstaff are hands on at their place of work - learning the skills of tending to the tree, shrub and plant areas are all important to the golf course.

2. There are specific times at which we carry out this work, normally when we have been around the golf course cutting and preparing for the days play. We then move to the shrub and flowerbeds that surround the clubhouse and 1st tee, and feature areas throughout the grounds.

3. All of the greenstaff have a knowledgeable outlook when working on the landscaped areas throughout the grounds.

4. Many of the projects have been a success as well as the areas that surround our "Tudor Revival" style building dating back to 1824. The land surrounding the clubhouse is a landscape design in itself, with many tree types common to the UK and with the help and guidance of Scottish Golf Environmental Group we have managed these wider areas with the correct sensitivity.

5. A well landscaped golf course is very important to the playing golfers, for look and the feel good factor but most importantly to our bird, butterfly and insect life that seek food and refuge from the types of trees, shrubs and wetland areas that we manage and have created throughout our golf course.

Name: **Sean McDade**
 Club: **Sandwell Park, West Bromwich**
 Position: **Deputy Course Manager**



1. We are expected to carryout all landscaping requirements on the course. The area around the clubhouse is looked after by a part-time gardener.

2. Not really, such works can only be carried out once the grass has slowed down - i.e. during the winter - such is also at the mercy of the weather. I do feel that some form of planned programme is, however, very useful for informing the members and prioritising projects.

3. Yes I have a lot of experience in Hard Landscaping. I am able to survey and draw plans, which also allows for quantities present and/or required to be calculated. Over the years I have reconstructed/introduced greens, tees, surrounds, drainage, paths, steps etc.

4. I have not been at my present club for long and as yet have not undertaken anything significant, but at my previous club, Penn GC, I undertook; the 1st tee/rear of 18 surround, the 3rd green, and the rear surround of the 14th green.

5. Such is very important from many aspects. Ease of efficient safe maintenance, which of course is linked directly to playability and standards of presentation. Also from an aesthetical point of view, features should emulate a natural blend within its environment even though it probably isn't. Presentation, presentation, presentation!

Name: **Peter Lacey**
 Club: **Pennard GC, Swansea**
 Position: **Head Greenkeeper**



1. The greenstaff are expected to undertake all landscaping/gardening work at the golf club. After completion of the new clubhouse building in 2001, the greenstaff undertook the design and landscaping of the clubhouse surrounds and gardens.

2. The maintenance of these areas is carried out as part of the overall golf course requirements, inclusive of mowing, weed and pest control, etc. Any other specific job/project such as re-turfing would be undertaken as part of the "winter work" requirements.

3. The knowledge and skills required to carry out these tasks, we have within our workforce, as all of our greenstaff have NVQ level 2 & 3 as a minimum requirement and many years of practical experience in construction/landscaping behind them.

4. Many greens, tees and even fairways have been landscaped in-house over the years, however it would be a close call between the recently re-modelled 145 yard par 3, 2nd hole re-built last year or the 165 yard par 3, 5th hole re-modelled in 1995.

5. A well-landscaped golf club that is easy on the eye, but most importantly is in keeping with its natural surroundings, is without doubt essential. After all, this is the starting point for what is to come and it is important to set the tone and to sell the image as early on as possible.