



MAKE TIME FOR TREES

Although they may look reliable, sturdy and big enough to look after themselves, trees, like the rest of us, need a little tender loving care every once in while.

Pruning, fertilisation and pesticide spraying can form part of a maintenance programme that allows trees to reach their full potential on a golf course, however forward thinking when planting these beautiful wonders of nature can help to avoid future problems and the need for the complicated process of tree removal.

In special supplement dedicated to trees, Melissa Jones talks to a tree surgeon, we also hear from an arboriculturalist, and various course managers/head greenkeepers divulge the secrets of their tree maintenance programmes.

STRAIGHT TALKING WITH A TREE SURGEON

Melissa Jones finds out from Tree Surgeon, Greg Whitton, exactly what his job entails...



What exactly do you do, what is your job title?

"I'm a Senior Arborist for Leeds City Council. In order to obtain this position you have to be a qualified tree climber. We tend to work in a group consisting of a couple of Senior Arborists and two trainees. A lot of my work consists of looking after trees at the side of the road, in parks and near council houses."

What kind of career opportunities does your job hold?

"Personally, I finished my degree in Business Management and started working for a civil engineering company. I saw a programme on the television about tree surgery and decided to do a basic qualification at Askham Bryan College to find out more about the subject."

"After discovering that tree surgery was for me, I enrolled on a 10 week short course at Merrist Wood College, which studied the practical aspects, such as pruning trees and how to work with dangerous trees, pest and diseases etc."

"The next step for me is the online course 'Technicians Certificate' I'm currently studying for through Myerscough College, this two part course

run over a year, will enable me to become more office based and eventually take on a managerial role, surveying trees."

"Most people I have met in this field have degrees or diplomas in arboriculture or have started out in apprenticeships and worked themselves up the ranks, a lot of them started out as groundsmen."

Why did you decide to go down the tree surgeon route?

"As I mentioned earlier, a programme on TV attracted me to this field of work. I'm very keen to run my own business and this career path will offer me this opportunity."

and we have to complete a certificate through the National Proficiency Test Centre (NPTC)."

What kinds of diseases do you come across when looking after the trees?

"There are a 101 different diseases that trees can get. Trees react differently to different environments. Most of the trees I deal with are by the side of the road so have been stressed by cars bashing into them, dogs weeing on them, not getting enough light or water etc."

"Trees on a golf course will be different in this environment and different factors i.e. types of fertiliser, will affect and disease them, golf ball damage etc."

“ I saw a programme on the television about tree surgery and decided to do a basic qualification at Askham Bryan College to find out more about the subject. ”

What satisfaction do you get out of your job?

"You are able to see the 'finished product'. This is how this 'hands-on' work differs from office work, in the office you cannot always see the goal but in this instance you can see the tree improving and growing and it's quite exciting."

What kind of health and safety measures do you need to have in place to undertake your work?

"Working for the council they are very keen on best practice. There are a lot of risk assessments and emergency scenarios to be completed and much of this is quite often common sense."

"As there are different roles within tree surgery, you need to be certified in each area that affects you. Health and safety measures are regulated

Useful Links

Colleges

www.guildford.ac.uk/College/MerristWood

www.myerscough.ac.uk

www.asham-bryan.ac.uk

Other

www.nptc.org.uk

www.ecotreecare.co.uk

www.treesurgery.com

www.trees.org.uk

www.rhs.org.uk

TREES AND FUN GOLF

By John Nicholson

SUPPLEMENT



Trees now form an integral part of many British golf courses, though this was certainly not the case 100 years ago when trees were not considered to be relevant to golf whatsoever, as all of the better courses were links. However with the evolution of golf architects such as Colt had identified that the heathland ecosystem represented similar qualities to that of the links, low fertility, sandy free draining soil and fine grass.

Colt had an intense dislike to playing golf in the winter on muddy clay based courses with broadleaf grass and soon realised that the heathland of Surrey and Berkshire offered the opportunity for all year round golf and classic playing conditions similar to the links. Further the heathland was poor

agriculturally therefore cheap to buy.

However heathland is a transitory ecosystem which will revert to woodland if left unmanaged, trees therefore became an issue and many people do not realise that heather is a woodland shrub which appears in gaps in the canopy. Therefore woodland management is needed if a heathland golf course is to remain intact.

The strategy of many of the traditional courses was to carry over a diagonal feature such as heather or a bund, however, a lot of older courses have been adversely affected by the encroachment of trees often forcing doglegs and removing the risk and reward from the shot. We should never forget that golf is played for fun and if this crucial element is lost then the popularity of the game will suffer and as finances get tighter this becomes even more pertinent.

The removal of trees in this situation is always politically sensitive as members think that it will make the hole easier, however, the carry often remains the same but becomes more appealing and tempts an adventurous shot; the one thing golfers have in common is that they think they are capable of shots that in truth they are not.

Trees bring out strong emotions in virtually everyone, many feel the removal of any tree should be punished by hanging however, there is a raised awareness that trees are only good if in the right place. My philosophy has always been that trees should form the framework in which the course is set but should have little relevance within the strategy of the course.

The doyen of strategic design Harry Colt stated:

'Trees are a fluky and obnoxious form of hazard, but they afford rather good protection, and if a clump of these exists at such a spot it might well be considered justifiable to leave it standing.'

H.S. Colt, Some essays on golf course architecture, 1920.

His comments are due to the strong three dimensional hazard trees form, this negates the skill of the talented player as whatever handicap a player is to play a chip from behind a tree is the same for all.

Woodland naturally regenerates around the perimeters or within gaps in the canopy therefore any areas of rough will eventually turn to woodland, this succession can often be rapid and goes undetected by those who view it on a daily basis. This has resulted in many courses losing land to woodland. Oak is regarded by many as a slow growing tree however it can put on up to 4 feet of growth in one season (not only upwards but also sideways) therefore significant amount of space can be lost each year.



Most woodland on a golf course is restricted by mowing regimes thus removing a woodlands natural ability to regenerate, therefore if sustainable woodland is to be achieved then a management policy is required to ensure a mixed age structure is created. A mixed age structure guarantees that as one generation of trees reaches senescence another is ready to take its place thus providing continuity of the landscape and its wildlife habitat.

Man has managed the woodlands of Britain since 1100bc, in one form or another, depending on his needs and it is often not realised that the face of what is thought to be natural Britain is manmade. The original woodland of southern Britain was predominantly Lime woods but Rule Britannia would never have ruled the waves if her ships had been made from Lime!

The misguided belief that woodland will manage itself is a dangerous philosophy, as man always intervenes by mowing or building on the edges of woodlands in exactly the spot where the woodland needs to regenerate. Woodlands are mobile and will therefore steal every piece of land available to them a policy is therefore required in order to ensure the woodland remains where the landowner requires.

If an edge is managed through mowing then the trees on the edges will become heliotropic (one sided looking for the light) this means that the tree puts all its energy into growing on only one side. Growth is therefore rapid and encroachment can occur in a relatively short period. If this adjoins a tee or green then it can have a detrimental effect on the agronomics and strategy of a hole. Tees can effectively be reduced in size creating excessive wear as players naturally favour the unimpeded line of play, both tees and greens can suffer from heavy shade and competition from roots which stress the sward and predispose the playing surface to disease. Further in winter areas can remain frozen and out of play for longer than necessary periods.

Therefore on urban courses, where space is at a premium, it is essential to ensure that the woodland edge is managed to safeguard the golf course. On more established courses encroachment may occur to such a degree that all of the strategy is lost and only one option from the tee is possible, hit it down the middle or into the trees. To give an example at Coombe Hill; this made for difficult but dull golf however once the edges were relocated (10-15 metres being gained either side) the course was able to embark on a more strategic bunkering programme which resulted in the club receiving the Golf World Award for best Renovation of the year in 2004 something which would not have been possible if the woodland had remained unmanaged. Further the course probably gained 2-3ha of land which was previously unusable how much would it cost to buy that amount of land in Kingston!

Finchley undertook a similar programme of woodland management finishing in 2005 and causing much debate amongst members and a lot of political pressure was placed on the course manager Craig Newton and committee to stop the programme in the first year. However both stood firm and the doubters are now quiet as the



benefits of the woodland programme are there to see, and the quality of the course and its set up for enjoyable golf has improved to such a degree that on a recent visit Ken Brown was even tempted to dust off his clubs.

Finchley is an example which many golf clubs could follow the course is set up so that it promotes fun golf with wide fairways, scenic woodland and great playing surfaces. The club now have the space necessary to review the bunkering in order to improve the challenge of the course without the need for penal golf with long rounds and lost balls.

Craig Newton, Course Manager said: "Before we managed the woodland many greens were closed in the winter for long periods, however, since the work was completed we have played continually on the greens 12 months of the year. Disease is far less frequent than in the past when we would have had to spray for Fusarium 5/6 times a year, however with improved light and air we have reduced this to 1 or 2 applications per annum. The grass sward is now much stronger I now have the

opportunity to keep the course in good condition for a much longer period.

"The woodlands were previously full of bramble and scrub which led to slow play and lost balls but now they feature bluebells, foxgloves and wild garlic and the majority of the members now really appreciate the attractive woodland that has resulted from the work."

Trees and woodlands offer many benefits they create important wildlife habitats for wonderful creatures such as woodpeckers and bats, they provide seclusion and protection and can act as attractive backdrops to golf holes. Sentinel oaks add majesty and in autumn trees can provide colours which brighten the day.

It is therefore essential to have sustainable woodland located in the correct position if a course is to reach its full potential, a net loss in numbers of trees but a positive gain in quality!

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TALKING HEADS

Melissa Jones quizzes Course Managers across the UK and abroad on how they go about looking after the trees on their course.

	Describe your make-up of trees at your golf course?	How do you manage them?
 <p>Name: Walter Montross MG Club: Westwood Country Club, USA Position: Superintendent</p>	<p>50-50 hardwoods (primarily Oaks, Maples, Ash, etc) to softwoods (White Pines and Spruce). We are a parkland course just outside of Washington, DC. The course was over planted in the 1960's and 70's to provide screening and strategic alignment. Many of these trees are now overgrown and at the end of their normal life expectancy. Geographically the course is located in zone 7 or as we call it here, the transition zone. We have cold winters (not a lot of snow) and hot humid summers.</p>	<p>Yearly pruning, fertilisation and some select pesticide spraying. Removal when necessary.</p>
 <p>Name: Duncan Gray Club: Pines Golf Centre, Scotland Position: Course Manager</p>	<p>A mix of new plantings which are indigenous to our area and older woodland which consists of some forestry commission conifers. We also have a natural regeneration of mixed woodland on an old sand quarry which is now a wetland. All plantings have taken into account the needs of birdlife, e.g. elderberry and rowan, and the red squirrels love the abundant Hazel trees.</p>	<p>Removal of lower branches on new plantations to facilitate mowing in playing areas and use of round up, and mulching at bases to avoid strimmer damage and aid growth rate.</p>
 <p>Name: Adam Speight Club: Woodsome Hall, The North Position: Head Greenkeeper</p>	<p>We have a large mixture of both indigenous and non-indigenous trees. The higher percentage is Pine and Birch.</p>	<p>Annually, all trees on the course are thoroughly pruned, and all lower branches and suckers are removed. A spray of total weedkill is applied around the base to prevent any smaller trees being smothered and to stop the need for cutting machinery to get too close and colliding with and damaging the trunk.</p>
 <p>Name: Rob Rowson Club: Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel & Country Club, Midlands Position: Course Manager</p>	<p>At the Forest of Arden the Golf Courses are mainly made up of: Common Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), but does have some Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) and Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>).</p>	<p>Each year all the trees in the rough grass are pruned from the crown of the tree to allow light, but also allow the tree to grow to the correct shape. The big coppices or woodlands are managed on a yearly rotation, two to three areas are picked per year to thin out and remove any dead wood/broken limbs etc. All work is carried out between October and March.</p>
 <p>Name: Paul Worster Club: Minchinhampton, South West Position: Course Manager</p>	<p>Both Minchinhampton Courses are on well-drained limestone brash with a high soil pH. In 1970, members planted thousands of Scots and Lodgepole Pines (and Leyland Cypress) on our Avening Course, which were intended to act as nurse trees to Beech, Sycamore, Lime and Ash. To this end - the pines are now being thinned intensively.</p> <p>Our Cherington Course (1995), as the result of a Planning Condition has been planted with only indigenous deciduous trees and hedgerow species. Ash, Beech, Rowan Sycamore, Hazel, Hawthorn and Blackthorn etc.</p>	<p>We have on-going winter programmes of inspection - pruning, thinning and transplanting. We have very successfully transplanted huge numbers of 30 year old trees into more strategic positions using a JCB. The Greens Committee is very conscious of the need to constantly manage trees as an important part of the course for landscape purposes as well as strategy.</p>
 <p>Name: Martin Forrester Club: Essex Golf & Country Club Position: Course Manager</p>	<p>On our course at Essex Golf & Country Club, we have Oaks, Ash, Pine trees - a whole mixture.</p>	<p>The mature trees tend to look after themselves, whereas trees in the rough are limbed up by ourselves to allow mowers to travel in and around them. Trees in the longer rough grow naturally and tend to be checked when we get the time, and dead wood etc is removed.</p>

MAKE TIME FOR TREES

Do you handle work in house or bring in a contractor?	Do you have a club policy/issue precluding non-indigenous trees on your golf course?	How do you convince members that tree removal is a positive exercise?
<p>We use a tree company for large tree pruning, removal and stump grinding. We also contract out the spraying if it entails trees too large for our equipment.</p>	<p>Our policy is to keep the hardwood trees as healthy as possible (within economic reason) and let Mother Nature selectively remove the softwoods.</p>	<p>We have used arborists, the USGA and golf course architects to point out trees that need to be removed. In spite of all the expert testimony it is still a difficult process. We have a lot of tree huggers.</p>
<p>All work is done in house, by both greenkeeping staff and members - one of whom works for the forestry commission and has helped enormously with all aspects of tree management.</p>	<p>No written policy, but as the wildlife aspect is very important to me I will always go down that route.</p>	<p>Fortunately I am in a position where I don't have to convince members but my policy is not to remove unless there is a danger to golfers or the general public. Forward thinking when planting trees will avoid the need to trim or remove them in future because they have encroached on play lines or are causing shade problems.</p>
<p>We are lucky enough to have four members of staff with chainsaw certificates, so the majority of tree felling and pruning is done by the team. We do use outside contractors for any jobs which require a climber.</p>	<p>There is no set policy precluding non-indigenous species. All tree selections are made by the Head Greenkeeper. Over the past years we have tried to steer more towards native species such as Ash, Maple, Lime and Beech, among others.</p>	<p>We have an excellent membership who are fully aware that all the work carried out is for the benefit of the course, so whether it be free removal or new planting, the members see it as positive course management.</p>
<p>All the work out is handled in-house, unless one of the listed trees comes down, then Packington Estate, who own the land deal with the work.</p>	<p>All trees are checked and monitored by Packington estate, they deal with any issues and problem areas, these areas are then addressed by Packington or the Forest of Arden team.</p>	<p>There are a number of ways to show the members that the work you're doing is positive by writing news letter explaining the pros for doing the work, such as increasing wild grasses, developing and improving weaker trees, increasing wildlife and finally tidying the area. Show members a before and after shot before the work is carried out during a power point presentation at the AGM and listen to their point of view.</p>
<p>We handle all work in-house. Utilising four trained greenstaff chainsaw operators, one of whom is licensed to climb trees, and a selection of chainsaws. We hire in a stump grinder at the end of the season, and are just about to purchase our own chipper. The trunks are sold for fuel to a member, who operates a "Carbon-Neutral" Guesthouse locally.</p>	<p>We have a "Tree Sub-Committee". This is composed of an Arboricultural Expert, a Landscape Expert, the Course Manager, the Greenstaff Ecology Projects Coordinator, and a Chairman. The health of the trees together with strategy and landscape considerations is assessed, and the Course Architect is consulted on matters of strategy. Therefore the General Committee are able to present an informed case to the members.</p>	<p>The formation of the Tree Sub-Committee has helped immensely. Prior to that there was a significant reluctance on the part of the members to fell any trees, even the Leyland Cypress. Photographs of Leylandii removal have also demonstrated very clearly that this species is completely alien to the Cotswolds, and the landscape looks all the better for replacement with indigenous trees.</p>
<p>We handle all our work in-house. As we are a young course, we don't have any hundred year old Oak trees etc that need special care. If a job was too big and required a specialist, then we would bring one in.</p>	<p>We have no written policy.</p>	<p>I find that word of mouth usually works. We have a quarterly members newsletter and we write a course report explaining any work that is due to be done on the course. This is a good way of communicating with our members and explaining that the work is necessary for the health of the tree.</p>

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TOOLS FOR TREES

Here are just a few products on the market that help with the upkeep of trees...

PRUNERS

ECHO Power Pruners® provide fast, easy and safe pruning for hard-to-reach applications. Loaded with features like lightweight design, comfortable controls, adjustable oiler, and Intenz™ guide bars make the Power Pruner a versatile tool that delivers commercial-grade tree care.



PPF-210: Fixed shaft Power Pruners cut thought jobs down to size.



PPT-260: Echo's most powerful Power Pruner is designed for the toughest jobs.

CHAINSAWS

Anyone using a chainsaw at work should have received adequate training in safe use.

Poor operator training and lack of attention can lead to accidents. The right protective clothing must be worn in order to minimise risks.

College and online courses in chainsaw training and maintenance are also available.

A pole saw or power pruner are useful if there doesn't happen to be a trained chainsaw operator on site as they offer less risk to the operator and the tree.



The 42cc, X-Series 8-42 from McCulloch has a super clean air filter system providing longer air filter life, reduced fuel consumption and increased power.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.echo-tools.co.uk

www.flymo.com

www.diy.com

www.powertooldirect.co.uk

www.bellwoodtrees.com