

Impact with Detail

by Joel Purpur, Supt.
River Forest Golf Club

We as Golf Course Superintendents strive to produce the best possible playing conditions on our courses. We try to consistently produce the smooth greens, dense healthy fairways and tees golfers will remember. But we must always remember that the actual playing conditions are only part of the complete picture that gives the favorable impact.

Paying or not paying attention to details is evident in most every aspect of golf course maintenance. Those who do the little extra are the ones most likely to be noticed. Granted, the elite clubs with higher budgets have more resources to work with. But many of the little things that make the difference are not costly, but an act of consciousness on the part of every worker to make the honest effort to complete all parts of each job without overlooking the details. It is our duty as Managers to make sure our employees are properly trained and performance continually critiqued.

For example, changing tee markers may seem like a menial task, but if the employee whizzes through the job with his or her mind somewhere else, each golfer may notice the sloppiness and get a bad impression. Are the tops of the ball washers clean and water level checked? Are the tee markers wiped off, pushed in straight and aligned with the fairway? Are the previous days divots and broken tees picked up? Are divots soil and seeded? Is the bench wiped off and the bottom of the garbage can clean? The list goes on.

Golfer conveniences are quickly noticed. Accessibility to tee equipment is one example. If ballwashers are permanently set, is there some type of surface material present, or is there a ring of dirt or mud with grass in the middle growing up the post? Are there clumps of grass around the spike brushes? Do the spike brushes have acceptable bristles? Overlooking these details will detract from beautiful playing conditions.

Although monitoring cart traffic can be an inconvenience to golfers, proper sign placement can help in some instances. If golfers driving carts find themselves caught in a dead end, many times they'll prefer to lock in the hubs and 4 wheel it around ropes rather than turning around and backtracking. A forewarning sign should work.

Ropes and signs are tools to help us monitor golfers, but if signs and ropes or chains are not properly maintained, a picture of neglect will immediately be painted. Ropes, chains and signs should be straightened at least daily.

Cart paths should be smoother than the surrounding turf. Pot holes force us off the paths defeating their purpose. It doesn't take much to run a backblade down the path or throw a couple shovels full of gravel in the holes. Running a blower down paved paths and parking lots (providing cars and golfers are not present) periodically cleans them up nicely and doesn't take much time either.

Most golfers appreciate landscaping with flowers and planters. We've all seen some real eye catchers which can really be an art form. But if planters or flower beds are let go, they can be eye catchers for the wrong reasons. Keeping up with landscape maintenance around the clubhouse is of utmost importance to assure a positive first impression, especially if other areas on the course are not as good as we would like to see them.

During M.A.G.C.S. Golf Days I'm sure we've all noticed

new or newly painted cups in the greens, which make us feel well treated. Hopefully our golfers receive the same treatment on their special outings.

Are clippings well scattered? Are yardage markers trimmed? Are sand trap rakes neatly spaced? The list goes on and on.

We seem to pay most attention to details at tournament time, rushing to make sure everything is at its best. We realize that to "peak" at tournament time, preparations start weeks in advance and course projects may take a backseat. But the fact remains that many of the odds and ends should be completed routinely and it is up to us as Managers to see that our personnel is properly trained and maintain the attitude of the importance of completing every part of every job without compromise.

Together with good playing conditions, paying attention to details will leave the golfer with a favorable impression and appreciation of our efforts ... providing they played well that day.

Tent Caterpillar Appearing Now

by James A. Fizzell

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Silk tents appearing in twig crotches and leaves disappearing from your favorite shade tree signal arrival of Eastern tent caterpillar.

These are some of the first insects to hatch in spring, closely following bud break on the host trees.

Tent caterpillars are often confused with gypsy moths which do not make tents, or with bagworms which carry small cocoon-like bags around as they feed. The young Eastern Tent caterpillars gather at a branch fork or crotch and spin a white silk tent about one inch in diameter. The caterpillars stay inside of this tent at night and during rainy weather.

During the day, the caterpillars crawl out onto the branches, spinning out a single strand of silk as they move away from the tent.

Before nightfall, after feeding on the leaves during the day, they retrace their steps along the silk strand back to their nest.

As the caterpillars grow they enlarge their silken tent. Each develops a white stripe down the back with a row of blue spots bordered with longitudinal yellow lines on either side of the stripe.

About the end of May, these caterpillars separate and each one spins a white silken cocoon on the tree trunk or some other object in which he pupates. The adult moths emerge in June.

After mating, the females lay their eggs on twigs that are usually about the diameter of a pencil. The egg mass is dark brown and usually extends completely around the twig. Each egg mass is about three-fourths of an inch across and contains 150-350 eggs. These eggs do not hatch until the following spring.

The easiest control of these insects, particularly on small trees, such as crabapple, is to clip out the silken tents at night when the caterpillars are inside. Put the tents in a plastic bag in garbage can or, the trees can be sprayed with **Bacillus thuringiensis** (Dipel, Thuricide), malathion, carbaryl (Sevin), or acephate (Orthene) to kill the larvae as they feed on the leaves.