

Trees and Golf Courses

(What you thought you knew about trees on your course but were afraid to ask)

by Lawrence R. Hall

Hendricksen, the Care of Trees

Trees add far more beauty to our golf courses. It is said by many that mature trees add to the pleasure of the game and cause a more relaxing atmosphere. The loss of a single well placed tree on a dog-leg can change the handicap of that hole.

There are many attributes we can talk about when discussing trees. They are important and so we must then suggest that proper selection and maintenance of the trees on your golf course is an important consideration.

The first step in this "Trees and Golf Course" discussion should be tree selection. We must learn to diversify. Let us try to expand our tree horizons and select a wider spectrum of tree species. A great lesson we all learned from Dutch Elm Disease was do not plant too much of any single species.

Many of us have over-planted a number of species. Most of us are aware of the wide spread honey locust problems this spring and early summer. The honey locust plant bug and leaf hopper (2 different insects) attacked the new leaves just as they were emerging. The locust were void of leaves till late June in many areas. The plant bug and leaf hopper involved are both host specific. More diversity is needed.

The Japanese beetle is building in population. Lindens and crab-apples are host plants — there are others that this beetle feeds on. As beetle populations build will it become more aggressive? Perhaps?

Once we accept diversification of plant materials as a way to go, we should look at the next step which would be proper planting procedures. Always plant at grade or an inch or two above grade. MULCH - MULCH - MULCH.

Is staking needed? Is wrapping of the trunk needed? Both of these considerations are falling out of favor for good reasons. There is a place and a need for both — but on a limited basis.

We should not infringe upon existing mature tree root systems by aggressively planting in established root zones. Young and frisky trees can tolerate much root loss without flinching. Mature trees can be seriously injured by too much root loss — this is especially true of sugar maples, white oaks, red oaks and beech.

The next step to address today is tree maintenance. If we had made good selections and properly planted these selections, we have made a big step towards reducing our maintenance budget.

Proper tree maintenance should start the first year that tree is placed on our sites. Proper pruning is the big key to starting our trees out to being what we want them to be. Proper pruning is the best thing we can do to maintain our trees. Improper pruning is the worst thing we can do. Do your people know how to prune properly?

A low branching habit where we wish to screen out a view or a high branching habit to enhance the game are concerns that should be addressed. Train your trees when they are young and as they reach adolescence, they will

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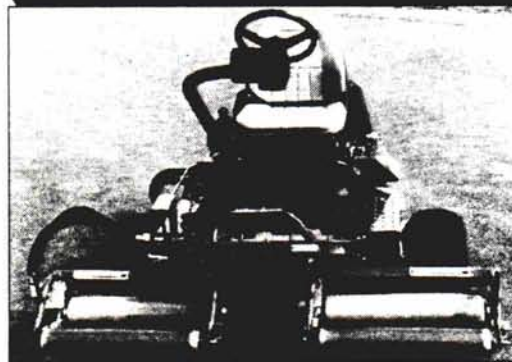
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(Trees & Golf Courses continued)

not be dysfunctional. Proper pruning improves the future branching habit.

Young trees benefit from touch-up pruning which is best done on an annual basis for the first 3 to 5 years. Do this and you will minimize many future structural and aesthetic concerns. This is surely a good way to keep people busy in those long winter months. Dormant season pruning should be emphasized.

There are pruning classes available if your people do not have the knowledge or are uncomfortable with their attempts at pruning. Do not allow unskilled people to prune your trees.

Other tree maintenance concerns we will try to briefly discuss are fertilization, pest management, cable/brace techniques and diseases of trees. We wish to emphasize the importance of proper mulching throughout this program.

Trees are important to your golf course and to our environment. Let's spend our time on what we can do to help the trees and keep the world of golf pleasant and beautiful.



And A Pinch of Baking Soda

Ready for a really handy fungicide? Dr. Kenneth Horst and his colleagues at Cornell University are seeing startling results using sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) to control powdery mildew and other fungal diseases. The compound, mixed with various spreader/sticker agents, not only prevents the growth of several fungal diseases, it cleans up plants already stricken.

Horst's work is primarily with ornamentals, but colleagues have had good results with grains, cucurbits, small fruit, and turf. Horst is unsure why a common compound such as baking soda works against diseases, but he says it controls mildews better than any other product he has seen, including those chemicals specifically marketed for mildew control.

Working with Church and Dwight, makers of Arm and Hammer baking soda, Horst recently met with EPA representatives in Washington. The goal: to get pesticide registration waivers or exemptions so that this product can be used in the agricultural market. The meetings, says Horst, were "very productive", and he expects to have sodium bicarbonate registered for use on ornamentals within 8 to 12 months. Registration for food crops would follow quickly, he believes.

Credit: Pesticides Coordinator Report



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