

See the Light: Improving Putting Surfaces Is Often As Simple As Increasing Sunlight

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At almost any golf course, there are usually several putting greens that the golf course superintendent and players claim never give them any agronomic trouble and perform consistently well. By no small coincidence, these greens are invariably the ones that are exposed to full sunlight all day with good air movement. Plants require sunlight to fix energy and good air movement allows for optimal cooling of the leaf tissue and drying of the upper soil profile. It may be difficult to distill turf agronomy to a more basic level. The conversion of radiant energy to chemical energy is in fact the basis of life on earth.

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Countless articles have been written discussing trees on the golf course. The subject matter of these articles ranges from tree maintenance to selecting appropriate species for use on golf courses to the potential for turfgrass problems. Many golfers are aware of the problems trees can cause turf due to shading and root competition. Trees can also concentrate traffic, wreak havoc on cart paths, harbor harmful turfgrass pests and add significantly to maintenance costs. But a tree-lined golf course seems to be the American dream for golf . . . first for definition and separation, or perhaps for color and aesthetic enhancement. The tree lobbyists argue for safety and liability issues, finally arriving at "that tree makes the hole." One of my favorite tree quotes comes from my colleague David Oatis, director of the Green Section's Northeast Region: "It's a good thing the Old Course at St. Andrews is not in this country, or it would have been ruined about 300 years ago with tree plantings." Obviously, trees are not appropriate at all golf courses.

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Most inland golf courses, however, do have some component of trees as part of the natural landscape. This is where a balance needs to be struck between highly maintained turfgrass (greens and tees) and the trees. Also pay attention to trees in high-traffic areas or other problem areas such as poorly drained sites. As a general rule of thumb, turfgrasses require eight hours of direct sunlight per day to maintain good performance. Of particular importance is morning sunlight. Photosynthetic activity is usually greatest in the morning, resulting in the energy fixation necessary for growth and recovery. Do not, therefore, plant trees to the east or south of greens and tees. A little foresight can safeguard the long-term health and performance of these critical areas of the golf course.

Removing problem trees can be a very controversial issue at golf courses, and the reasons cited are too numerous to elucidate. The bottom line is that we are talking about a golf course, not an arboretum, and there is no substitute for sunlight. Limited sunlight will affect turf quality, turf reliability and playing quality. Compass readings and time-lapse photography can help determine trees that are candidates for removal. In recent years, computer software has been developed to analyze shading from trees. This technique can graphically illustrate the amount of shade cast by individual trees throughout the year with amazing accuracy. Computer analysis removes the guesswork from tree removal and replaces it with data, and sometimes emotional controversy can be replaced with science. Digital imaging can also be a valuable tool to show

people what the hole will look like following tree removal.

Trees will always be a difficult issue at golf courses across the country. Golfers will have to be continuously reminded and educated about the negative consequences that can occur as a result of poorly located trees. Sometimes, a simple tour around the course with a comparison of shaded turf and turf exposed to full sunlight is all that is needed. Oftentimes, however, more convincing will be necessary. Be sure to contact your regional Green Section office to obtain assistance with this difficult issue and perhaps schedule a TAS visit. To have consistent top-quality turfgrass, it has to see the light. 

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thought, how amazing is this! I was pleased that I did find a common denominator between Bob and myself, in that I wake up every day and find it enjoyable to go to my job. He said he never considered it going to **work**, and I must agree with him. Through the ages, this mindset is part of our motivation to do what we do.

However, the engine to our motivation remains to be identified. I think I found it; in fact, I know I found it. In deciding on a topic for my last message, I did some soul-searching and I realized what makes me tick. It has a lot to do with doing a good job. But it has everything to do with *being appreciated* for doing a good job. Everyone needs to feel appreciated. A wife likes flowers because they are pretty, but beyond that, because she feels they signify the value of all she accomplishes and

appreciation for same. Bonus checks are wonderful, but the sense of appreciation for a job well done that they represent is going to last longer. Appreciation is the motivation for doing that extra task, helping out with something that would be easier to walk away from. If you think about it from that perspective, when you do not feel appreciated you generally have no desire to do any more than what you are required to do. And being happy is not a requirement.

The very wise proverb of treating those around you the way you would want them to treat you, should be the golden rule. How enjoyable life would be to rid the world of hate, divorce, child abuse, etc. That is very wishful thinking, but I think everything could revolve around making appreciation a priority. I

feel comfortable with the self-awareness that I am greatly motivated by a sense of appreciation. That being said, I am going to assume I am no different than anyone else. I am going to step up my efforts to appreciate all of those relationships around me, wife, children, grounds crew, even my bosses. Who knows, this may be the missing piece that will keep all those relationships intact.

Let us all try to nurture what we have, as well as those we have influence on. I believe there is plenty of appreciation to go around. And yes, I appreciate all of you for giving me the opportunity to lead this magnificent organization. It has been fun and I encourage all of you who have not yet served to consider it for your future. God bless. 