

If so, why now?

- Other problems may have masked disease
- New management techniques may be creating window of opportunity for disease
- The weather has changed over the last two years

Dr. Latin explained, "The turf environment is very complex and has a very diverse microbial population. The disease has almost exclusively been reported on turf maintained at greens height. It seems to be most prevalent at very high profile courses with aggressive maintenance practices and low tolerances for cosmetic damage."

He went on to state: "We have not been successful at replicating field conditions in the lab/check plots."

Are there predisposing factors? Does heat, drought, grooming, mowing, traffic, PGR's, nitrogen stress, fungicide applications, affect disease susceptibility? Research at Quail Hollow has used various products for treatment. No results have been achieved.

"If you think you may have bacterial wilt, the best thing you can do is promote healthy roots. Good agronomy is very important," Dr. Latin said. He went on to make sure we are covering the basics:

1. Aerification in spring
2. Raise height of cut
3. Light topdressing with no dragging
4. No vertical mowing

Final thoughts by Dr. Latin on the subject, "before you do anything, get an accurate diagnosis." For further information Dr. Latin may be contacted at [rlatin@purdue.edu](mailto:rlatin@purdue.edu)



Steve Cook

Steve Cook, CGCS, MG who has been at Oakland Hills Country Club since 1997 presented **"When Weeds Become Hard."** This topic is related to the ongoing tree removal work and restoration of the original design playability intent at Oakland Hills as envisioned by Golf Course Architect Donald Ross.

"People become very emotionally attached to trees," Steve began. Oakland Hills was not designed to be a tree lined parkland golf course. Most of the trees were planted later on by Green Committees. Steve explained throughout his talk that these trees hide the existing natural land forms and features that Donald Ross utilized when he designed the golf course. He tactically used the existing landforms when he built the tees, green complexes and fairway landing areas. So many of the trees are non-native and considered by Steve to be "bad" trees on the property specifically Silver Maples, Honey Locusts, Willows and Colorado Blue Spruces.

Unlike Oakmont Country Club that did all of their tree removal in one massive swipe, Oakland Hills has embarked on a multi-year tree removal plan. "The whole removal process has been very slow to unfold. Tree removal needs to be justified and documented for agronomic and architectural reasons each step of the way," Steve explained. Because of this thorough documentation consisted of: shade studies, tree surveys, replacement costs and tree maintenance principals. Steve wanted to emphasize the "real cost" of trees. Not only does it cost money to plant the tree, but also the annual costs to remove leaves, seeds, branches and regular pruning.

Steve proposed a set of guidelines covering tree maintenance principals to the club. The intent was to provide future tree specification so the course does not revert back to its past ways of random tree planting. Some of those guidelines include:

1. Minimum proximity at mature canopy diameter, to adjacent tees and greens.
2. Trees will not be planted where branches at maturity will not block normal advancement of the ball toward a fairway bunker or green.
3. All future tree plantings will favor native hardwood species on proposed list.
4. Trees will only be planted in January and February.
5. Trees will not be planted where shade of mature tree will inhibit playing surfaces.

Steve has been involved in this process/program for quite a while. He is very passionate about restoring the original playability intent of the Donald Ross design which places a heavy emphasis on the ground game. He said it has required quite a bit of "sales" techniques using appropriate terminology, photography and he continue to keep members focused on restoration principals.

As you can imagine, this has been a challenging process for Steve. He has been a leader at Oakland Hills and in the industry promoting (not always popular) tree removal. I believe many more Clubs in the future will be following this trend. Original architects will continue to be recognized and courses will continue to be restored to their original playing intent of the golf ball rolling on the ground. This is good for agronomics, good for reducing costs, good for playability and most importantly, good for golf.

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