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## TREE PLANTING – GOLF DIVISION

**G**iven the importance of trees to your golf course, “now” is always the time to develop a long-term plan for these important landscape elements. Some courses hire landscape architects for tree planting plans, failing to realize what a golf course architect brings to the task. Those talented, well-intentioned landscape architects then often locate the wrong trees in the wrong places, out of an ignorance of good golf. Many golf course architects are also landscape architects, and can consider all aspects to your tree planting master plan. These will include:

**IT’S A GOLF COURSE.** Strategy and playability trump landscape beauty. That small tree planted on the inside corner of the dogleg may eventually grow into a problem, blocking shots or narrowing the play corridor. Only golf course architects know what those effects may be. Golf course architects also understand where trees may aid safety, frame or block views, control and direct traffic, etc.

I once hired a non-golfing, college student as a summer intern and took him to a meeting for experience. Ignoring my instructions to remain silent, he burst in to suggest plantings of pines in play areas, believing that lost balls contributed to difficulty, which he thought was a good thing on a public golf course.

It’s not an arboretum. Turf health also trumps landscape beauty, making trees of secondary importance to shade, framing, safety, etc. A golf course architect also considers the relatively high cost of various species (such as breaking limbs and short lifespan of cottonwoods) or use of attractive, but non-native species that require regular high maintenance practices that don’t necessarily reflect in your bottom line when devising a tree plan.

**IT’S NOT AN ARBORETUM, BUT...** While it’s usually best to avoid the highly flowered Augusta National look in most cases, sometimes, landscape accent is required. A common mistake is to put ornamental plantings in areas where they will gobble golf balls. A golf course architect will know where limited ornamentals will get multiple views, while avoiding slow play.

**IT’S NOT A SOD FARM, EITHER, BUT...** Golf turf often has higher traffic than a park, and the turf takes precedence. Tree locations should consider allowing early morning sunlight to reach tees and greens.

**WATER CONSERVATION.** Studies show that most trees require most soil moisture than turf. Most courses need to conserve water, so golf courses should factor landscaping into their irrigation scheme. Some locales have ordinances dictating both decreased irrigation use and increased tree planting, which can be contradictory. One way to counter it is to use water miser trees, wisely incorporate native species. In some areas, water quality affects tree canopy, requiring drip irrigation. Irrigation lake location/expansion/design etc. is also best suited for a golf course architect to design.

**LONG-TERM EFFECTS.** If done as part of a long-term master plan, the golf course architect will consider not only where the greens and tees are now, but also where they will be at the completion of the master plan.

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**LONG-TERM EFFECTS PART II.** A healthy tree community requires annual replacement of 2-10 percent of its total trees. A careful tree management plan allows you to maintain a majority of your trees in their primes. Long-term thinking also reduces the emphasis on a currently popular, but unproven trend, which may not be durable – think dutch elm disease. I’ve seen young landscape architects ignore hard-learned past lessons in using borderline hardy trees in tough climates. Old timers know that extreme conditions killed off similar trees well before the “young pup landscape architects” were even born.

**CLUB POLITICS.** Given the sensitivity towards tree issues, your golf course architect should be more in tune with the course politics, and probably better at guiding the decisions through your political process.

**SHORT VERSION.** Don’t forget your trees in long term planting, and don’t forget that your golf course architect is probably the most conversant in how trees affect your golf experience. **GCI**