

Greenkeepers Have Big Task Guarding Nature's Beauty

By PROF. FRANZ AUST

Landscaping today is recognized as a factor of prime importance in the operations of every greenkeeper. Professor Aust's address was one of the features of Wisconsin university's short course for greenkeepers.

THE best golf course is that in which the greenkeeper is in cooperation with a good landscape architect who will give him expert advice and help him to build up a resistance against removing natural plantings, or it is one in which the greenkeeper himself fully realizes the value of a beautiful natural setting. He should be able to take care of the beauty phases as well as the commercial aspects of a golf course. He will, for example, consider carefully before digging out a tree that is two or three hundred years old just because the place upon which it stands is a good location for a green or a fairway.

In Scotland where golf had its beginning, one of the primary purposes of the game was to enable a man to get out into the open where he could see the beauty of the dunes, the heather, and the broad expanse of the ocean. The courses of that country were the only real golf "links" that have ever existed. For, instead of referring to saugages or links in a chain, as some believe, "links" was the name given to the sand hills along the seashore where the short, close turf and the many natural hazards, as sand holes and banks, bents and whins, supplied ideal conditions for the game.

In this country, ordinarily, two views of the situation have prevailed. One is that there should be no trees, no shrubs, no flowers on golf courses; there should be nothing to detract from the game. Golf must be the one and only consideration. The other is that the Scotch links should be imitated wherever and whenever pos-

sible. There are two reasons for this. One is that some of the golf architects of this country have been lacking in imagination in the use of American plant materials, and the other that it is much less difficult to lay out a course without trees and shrubs than to make wise use of them.

But beauty of plantings on a golf course need never be a hindrance to good playing, so there is no excuse for barren golf courses. Neither is there any need for imitation. "America for Americans" applies to golf as well as to other phases of life in this "land of the free." With American material, beauty equal to the dunes of Scotland or to any other Old World spot can be secured.

Purpose of Landscaping

Bringing beauty to a golf course by means of plantings means arranging the plant materials so that the course will appear as a unit. There will be a definite relation of the whole course to each of the parts, and of the parts to the whole.

By using border plantings, seclusion and privacy can be brought to the course. In some courses thirty per cent of the fairways are separated from other fairways by deep tree plantings. Sometimes it may mean that more land must be purchased in order to get this privacy, and it may mean a four or five per cent increase in labor costs, but returns will come in the added popularity of such a course.

There are other economic phases of beauty on a golf course. Border plantings of shrubs may mark the direction of the fairway, bringing greater convenience to players. Shrubs or trees may mark the bend in the "dog-leg" and follow the outlines of the drives.

Color a Course Asset

Beauty which changes with the seasons may not at first seem to be an economic asset to a golf course. It is true that, to ninety per cent of the players, flowers and foliage and changing tints of autumn or spring may have but little meaning. But

the charm that those natural features have for the other ten per cent will, in time, spread until many others have caught the spirit of the great out-of-doors.

In Wisconsin and other central states, in some places in the rough, huge patches of pasque flowers might be naturalized. In early spring their blue haze on a hillside may prove to be a real attraction to the course. In summer, the hazel, the witch-hazel, and the hawthorn will add splashes of unusual shades and tints. For fall color, also, there are the sumach and the American high bush cranberry, which is more free from aphids than the European variety often sold by nurserymen. For spring, summer and autumn beauty there are the nannyberry, the Indian raisin, and the gray dogwood. Lilac borders are beautiful for their springtime bloom, but native shrubs should be used whenever possible. Lilacs are for sentiment, but native shrubs are for American spirit. For a low-growing shrub that thrives in sandy areas, New Jersey tea is a desirable choice. Prairie rose is often found satisfactory as a border planting between the roadway and the fence enclosing the course. It can be cut back to within six or eight inches of the ground in late fall to avoid its being the cause of snow drifting in the roadway.

Clubhouse Plantings

Around the clubhouse the chief aim should be to keep away from the city aspect so often seen in such surroundings. The appearance of the open country, desirable in the course itself, should be carried to the very doors of the clubhouse. In order to do this, the shapes of trees and shrub plantings should be kept natural, and their habits should be studied that they may be placed in the best locations. If the clubhouse has foundation walls, a few well-chosen shrubs should be used around them to tie the building to its setting, always keeping them low in front of windows. If there are no foundation walls above the ground, as in the case of many modern clubhouses, a vine or two is all that is necessary.

An important item in planting both on the course and around a clubhouse is to make the most of every possible vista. In fact, a clubhouse should be designed to make the most of the vistas. Then, plantings should be arranged so that they will frame the wonderful pictures that are sure to be there as one looks from the windows

toward the course, or from the course toward the clubhouse. A view of a lake, a distant church spire, are some of the points of interest that should be capitalized.

If there are water features on the course or near the clubhouse, they should be kept as natural as possible. Sometimes it may seem advisable to build rustic bridges, but they should always have tree or shrub plantings about them to take away the look of bareness.

A parking area should seldom be visible from the clubhouse. This can be avoided by using the right kind of tall shrub plantings and trees for screening purposes.

"Don't's" in Planting

There are many "don'ts" in the landscaping of golf grounds and in the landscaping problems which a greenkeeper has to meet. In the first place, fast-growing trees should seldom be planted unless slower-growing, more permanent ones are to take their places after a time. The main objection to a quick-growing tree, like the soft maple or a willow, on a golf course, is that most trees of this type have whitish undersurfaces on their leaves. When the leaves drop in autumn they are a great obstacle to the finding of a lost ball. The silver poplar is one of the greatest offenders in this regard.

A tree should never bring the element of chance to a golf course. That is, it should never be planted in such a position that it will be likely to penalize a good player. Tree plantings, however, can be placed around one tee out of three without being a detriment to a good player. Therefore, if a poor player is penalized because of such plantings, it can probably be regarded as part of his education.

Deep-rooted trees, like the oak and the elm, the hickory, the basswood, the beech, are safest and best for golf ground use. Foreign trees, no matter how magnificent they may be in their own native haunts, have no place on an American golf course. Even the Norway maple should be omitted, usually, because the length of its life is uncertain, and one cannot tell whether its shape will be picturesque when it is grown. This tree may likewise be a menace by being subject to pests and diseases. And like the sparrow and the starling in relation to American birds, those foreign trees may drive out native plantings.