

Tree Program Should Rate High on Every Maintenance Schedule

By MARTIN L. DAVEY

IN THE rush and turmoil of getting greens, tees, and fairways in good condition for the playing season—and keeping them that way after the season gets going—the trees growing on a golf course are often slighted by the greenkeeper and considered only casually by the club officials.

It is easy to understand why this is so often the case. A half-dead, neglected tree on a course rarely gets more than a sympathetic glance from a few of the golfers, whereas a neglected green, with dying turf, is certain to evoke a volcano of complaints. A tree may be eaten by decay and attacked by a horde of insects and the green-chairman seldom hears a protest, but let a trace of brown-patch or crab grass make its appearance and he is instantly deluged with lamentations.

Reducing complaints of any kind to the minimum is the aim of everyone connected with the management and operation of golf clubs. And since the players are far more likely to complain about the condition of the course than they are about the trees, it is only natural that the course gets the lion's share of attention.

If a club cares only about its popularity today and tomorrow, such a policy may be quite satisfactory to everyone concerned. Many clubs have learned, however, that while such a course may be expedient, it is short-sighted—it doesn't give the future a fair shake.

That trees are well-nigh indispensable on a golf course goes without saying. Planted between parallel fairways, they provide a screen which protects players from being struck by badly hit balls on the fairway adjoining. They provide shade for the players on blistering summer days. They serve as splendid natural hazards. They protect the soil from driving rains; mighty few bad washouts occur on courses where trees border the fairways.

Trees are desired on golf courses just as much for esthetic reasons as they are for practical reasons. Man is essentially an outdoor creature and the beauty of the

out-of-doors beckons to him always. He may not be conscious of any inner urge to go out and "commune with nature" but it is there nevertheless. So he instinctively likes best to go to the courses which are naturally beautiful and nine times out of ten that means courses which are blessed with trees.

All this is obvious. It is likewise obvious that the trees will be needed by the club just as badly in future years as they are at present and that if they are being neglected, the club is dissipating an asset which is practically irreplaceable.

Annual Tree Appropriation

Realizing this, the officials of many clubs consider their trees conscientiously. They want their clubs to be as beautiful 10, 20, or 50 years from now as they are at present, and they know that this will not be possible if they do not give the trees the attention they deserve. An annual appropriation for tree care, therefore, is being included in the budgets of a steadily increasing number of clubs.

With a definite amount of money available, it is comparatively easy for the greenkeeper to estimate accurately how much work can be done and to determine what work should be done first. He is often aided in doing this by experienced tree experts who make a survey of all the trees on the course and map out a program of work to be done over a period of years.

This year particular attention should be paid to the feeding of trees, due to the fact that their vitality was greatly lowered as a result of the unusual weather conditions which prevailed over almost the entire country during the past two

This is the first of a series of articles regarding the care of trees on golf courses which are being written for GOLFDOM by Martin L. Davey, noted conservationist, and president of the Davey Tree Expert Co.

years. Greenkeepers who fought month after month last summer to keep their courses in even a halfway presentable condition do not have to be reminded how bad the weather was for all growing things—trees as well as grass.

1929 Bad for Trees

In 1929, the combination of a cold, wet spring and a dry summer hurt the trees tremendously. They were able to store up only a fraction of the amount of food required. As a result, they started this year in a weakened condition. Then came the worst drought in the memory of any living man. Many sections had no rain whatever for several months. Countless thousands of trees were killed, and thousands more are now in the process of dying. All the ill effects of the drought were not immediately apparent—some will not show up until next year.

Many of the trees which are now hovering on the border line between life and death can be saved if cared for properly. The main thing they will need when the growing season starts next spring is an available supply of nourishing food. If they can get it, they will be able to build up their strength rapidly and overcome the handicaps they are now under. If they fail to get a good start, they probably will become steadily weaker and will die.

If the condition of the trees is critical, and if the soil around their roots is heavy and hard packed, it is advisable that they be fertilized by the cultivation method. The ground above the roots should be worked up and loosened and the fertilizer should be mixed with it, great care being exercised to avoid injury to the roots. The more thorough the mixing, the more efficient will be the feeding. It goes without saying that a good grade of tree food should be used and that it should be applied in the proper quantities. The cultivated area should then be heavily mulched, and should not be resodded for a period of two years.

In less serious cases, excellent results will be obtained by the perforation method of fertilization. This method does not necessitate removal of the sod from under the trees. Holes are dug with a crowbar over the entire root area, about one foot apart, and to the depth occupied by the roots. After the fertilizer is poured in the holes, they can be filled with earth and the sod cap replaced. Whenever possible, the fertilization should be entrusted

to experts who know exactly how much food the trees require and how it can be best applied. Excessive amounts of quickly available fertilizers may easily kill trees.

If the fertilizer is applied this fall, it will become well distributed throughout the soil around the roots by spring and will be available as soon as the roots become active.

Spraying Is Demanded

Special care should be given to spraying this year for the same reason that the trees should be fertilized. Inasmuch as the trees have been seriously weakened, they will be much more susceptible to disease and insects than normally, and if they are attacked by any pest which makes them any weaker than they are at present, they undoubtedly will die. Consequently, it is obvious that more than ordinary attention should be paid to disease and insect prevention.

The many kinds of scale which are particularly dangerous to trees in a weakened condition should be attacked as soon as possible. The substances which must be used to kill them are injurious to leaves and consequently the spraying must be done during the dormant season.

Many of the diseases which afflict trees and also many of the trees' insect enemies can only be attacked or warded off after the leaves come out. It will be advisable, therefore, to have the trees inspected next year at regular intervals to determine if spraying will be required. One or two sprayings may prove to be the deciding factor in the trees' struggle to overcome the effects of the drought.

Spraying, incidentally, is a phase of tree work which should be done by experts. It is easy enough to mix a couple pounds of chemicals with water and spray the mixture on the trees but unless the spraying is done by someone who knows exactly what insects or diseases are harming the trees, he cannot know what chemicals to use, what quantities, how they should be applied, or at what seasons. Done improperly, spraying may injure the trees and perhaps kill them; done by experts, it is the most effective means known for combating pests.

A noted golfer once said that the three greatest assets of any golf club are the course, the clubhouse and the trees. Un- course, the clubhouse and the trees. His statement is obviously true, and let no one under-estimate the importance of trees.