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Tree Restoration at Shaker Heights

Dutch elm disease has taken a heavy toll at the Cleveland club, but Colin Smith's re-forestation program is catching up with it

By **JOE DOAN**

A club that has lost more than 100 of its towering elm trees every year for the last 15 years or so normally would be expected to lose nearly all vestiges of its original or early beauty, but that hasn't happened at Shaker Heights CC in Cleveland, devastated by Dutch elm blight as it has been.

Undoubtedly it's because Colin Smith, who doesn't believe that maintaining a golf course begins and ends with managing turf, is the supt. at Shaker. In the last 10 years or so, Smith planting mainly red and scarlet oak, fir and hard maple with a generous sprinkling of blue spruce, hemlock, hawthorn and crab apple, has replaced nearly all of nearly 2,000 elm trees that have had to be removed following Dutch elm disease attacks.

At first glance, the replacement of thousands of trees on a 144 acre estate where most of the emphasis has had to be on the upkeep of fairways and greens may seem like an insurmountable undertaking. But Smith prepared for it by first establishing a nursery back around 1952, and then waiting for two years before starting to replace the elms which, by this time, were being thoroughly decimated. Thereafter, he set out an average of 200 trees a year, doing most of the work in the fall.

Today, the Shaker Heights nursery contains about 8,000 deciduous trees and about 5,000 fir trees and evergreens. A second nursery serves as a transition area between the main nursery and the course. Trees that are to be transplanted to the course as well as the clubhouse grounds are kept in this area, where the soil is richer, until they are permanently located.



Colin Smith, Shaker Heights supt., points to plaque that is a memorial to E. Miller France who supervised planting of 75 per cent of the trees when the Cleveland club was started.

Spends \$10,000 A Year

The Shaker Heights re-forestation program has consistently cost from \$7,500 to \$10,000 annually for the last decade.

Colin Smith has been in the course maintenance business for nearly 35 years. The first 15 of these were spent at clubs in Akron and at Sleepy Hollow, which also is located in Cleveland. He came to Shaker Heights at the end of World War II. Like many greenmasters, Colin concedes that until 15, or perhaps 20 years ago, he couldn't see the trees for the golf course. If they hadn't been there, he may never have noticed their absence.

Then he came under the persuasion of the late E. Miller France, one of the older Shaker Heights members, and he had no choice but to develop an awareness of trees. Smith recalls with some wistfulness that soon after he started working at Shaker, Mr. France came to the maintenance building to inform him that his education in arboriculture was about to begin. And it did, slowly perhaps at first, but nevertheless with certainty.

Supervised Early Planting

Mr. France, it developed, had planted possibly 75 per cent of the trees at the

then 30-year old Shaker Heights club. This included approximately 2,500 elm trees along with numerous other varieties that were set out with studied care to accent the rolling beauty of the Cleveland course. "Mr. France," says Smith, "was a real artist when it came to trees. He produced some arrangements that were simply beautiful. He was very painstaking in the way he planted them. It wasn't unusual for him to have a fairly large tree moved only two or three feet to get the effect he wanted."

Disease Moved West

There is a memorial near the practice green at Shaker which reads: "To E. Miller France, Dean of Foresters, whose landscape artistry and devotion have endowed these grounds with enduring beauty." The memorial was placed in 1956, about a year after Mr. France died. Since then the club has adopted the practice of setting out trees as memorials to deceased members. One of these has been planted in memory of David Livie, who was the pro at Shaker Heights for many years.

Dutch elm disease got a foothold on the East coast in the early '30s and in-



Only low-lying shrubs and dwarf fir trees are planted in shelter areas at Shaker so that shelter houses aren't hidden from view.

vaded the Cleveland area around the end of World War II. Within five or six years it was evident that the elms at Shaker Heights had been extremely hard hit. It was then that Colin Smith established the tree nurseries.

Red and scarlet oaks, hard maple and fir trees have been used most extensively in replacing the elms that have had to be removed. Blue spruce, hemlock, hawthorn, crab apple and Lombardy poplars have been planted where beauty or perhaps utility have dictated that they be used. When quick and temporary cover is wanted, Smith sets in willows and soft maples. The Shaker Heights supt., however, describes the latter varieties as being nothing better than weeds and pulls them out as soon as he can arrange to make permanent plantings.

Call in Consultant

The most important consideration in tree planting, Smith says, is to make sure that the roots have proper drainage in all directions. Trunks of deciduous saplings, or whips as they are sometimes called, are wrapped in paper which is kept on for about one year. When dead trees are cut down and stumps removed, it is advisable to build up the cavities in a chocolate drop effect to allow for eventual sinkage of the fill.

When a planting or restoration program is undertaken, time and money will be

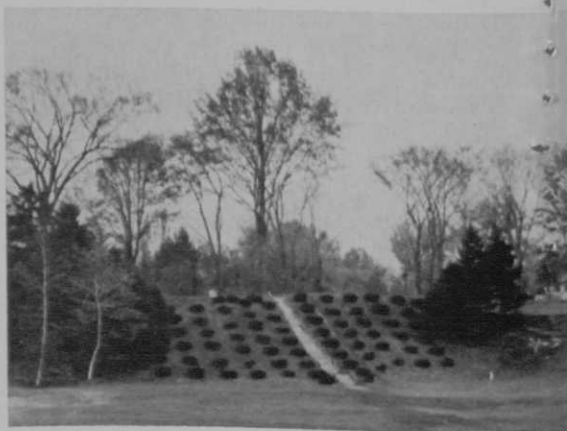
saved and poor planning avoided by calling in tree specialists, such as from the Davey Tree Service Co., according to Smith. After a few months of observing and working with an outside crew, planting, irrigation, pruning and similar operations usually can be handled by the club's maintenance department. A competent arborist can be just as valuable a consultant as an agronomist, Smith adds.

There are many theories as to how the large scale planting of trees should be carried out. Balance, a predominant theme, harmony with the way in which a course is graded and wide use of bays and points should be the main considerations in tree layout, according to arborists. At Shaker Heights plantings have been made with the thought in mind that when the trees reach maturity, the taller ones will be seen in continuous lines, broken by clumps of low lying trees. The pro shop, which is located some distance from the clubhouse, and the maintenance building are centered in islands of trees. Shelters are surrounded by evergreens and low-growing firs so that they aren't hidden from view.

Point Toward Greens

In at least two or three spots, Smith has contrived to top fairway trees so that they give the illusion of pointing toward

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Small taxus plants that line the bank of a tee minimize erosion and give an unusual scenic effect.

10 (T-47) and Tifway continue to point to these Bermuda strains as being exceptionally well adapted for recreation as well as lawn areas. Jim Watson emphasized that grass actually has a precarious existence, considering that nature doesn't intend for it to be cut as short as it normally is. As a result, moisture and fertility conditions have to be ideal or most strains won't survive periods of stress. Ferguson decried poor planning in the installation of irrigation and drainage systems, which is in evidence at many courses throughout the U.S., and said that much of the trouble caused by pythium and other diseases last summer was due to the poor engineering of these installations.

Michigan Report Published

Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Michigan State U., East Lansing, recently published the "Michigan Turfgrass Report" which was compiled and edited by James Beard, turf researcher in the crop science department.

The first article, dealing with turf

varieties in Michigan, contains information of interest to a wide range of people, including supts. There are also articles on seeding rates and bentgrass putting greens.

Tree Restoration

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the greens. Along another fairway that is bordered by apartment buildings, the Shaker Heights greenmaster has blended low lying evergreens, firs of medium height and tall trees into a panorama that subtly softens the harsh lines of the buildings. Surrounding the parking lot on three sides is an unusual hedge of hard maples that has been shaped by trimming the trees square across the top at a height of about 20 feet.

What Smith considers his masterpiece is located close to the center of the course. A high wire screen at the end of the practice range is hidden by a long line of poplars fronted by one red and one scarlet oak, planted about 50 or 60 feet

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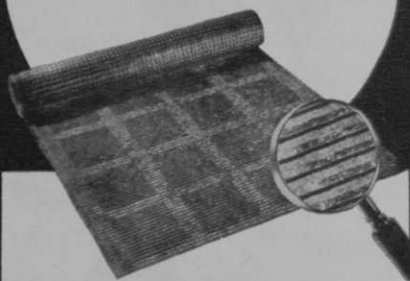
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apart. Lombardies that are planted in line have a way of presenting a stately appearance, but the addition of the two oaks gives the scene an uncommonly beautiful illusion of depth that isn't often captured. An arborist would undoubtedly agree that it is rare when anyone happens to contrive such an arrangement.

And Flowers, Too

The course beautiful theme doesn't stop with the tree pattern at Shaker. While Colin Smith was being converted to becoming an arboriculturist he developed a great fondness for flowers. So, it wasn't long before the clubhouse grounds and many out-of-the-way spots on the course were overflowing with color from spring until late fall.

As another step in the beautification of the Cleveland course, Smith started a project two or three years ago of raising sandtraps from their flat beds so that they are seen obliquely. He feels that supts. overlook many opportunities to improve the appearance of their courses by not doing this. Traps have an endless number of striking configurations, but these too often are not seen because the traps are buried at or below the grade level. It is only when they are embanked that the full character of the green is brought out.

Lynn A. Smith Elected President of Southern California Golf Assn.

Lynn A. Smith, president of Picco Industries of El Monte, Calif., was recently elected president of the SCGA. During the



past year he served as vice-president and was chairman of the association membership and tournament committee. Smith succeeds Charles H. Laws, and has served on the SCGA board since 1956. He is a member of the Seniors Golf Assn. of Southern Cal and also is a director and secretary of the Calif. Golf Assn. and Calif. Dist. Chairman of the USGA Greens Section.

Other officers elected for 1965 are: Paul Giesser, vp; Dr. Wynn Fredericks, secretary; and Gordon Booth, treasurer.