

# Real-Life Solutions

■ IMPROVING THE TEE AREA

## Sprucing Up Tees on a Bargain Budget

You'll be surprised what you can do without breaking the bank

BY PETER BLAIS

**T**he tee area is an opportunity for a golf course to make 18 first impressions.

With a little time, effort and a minimal amount of money, superintendents can make those initial impressions a round full of good ones.

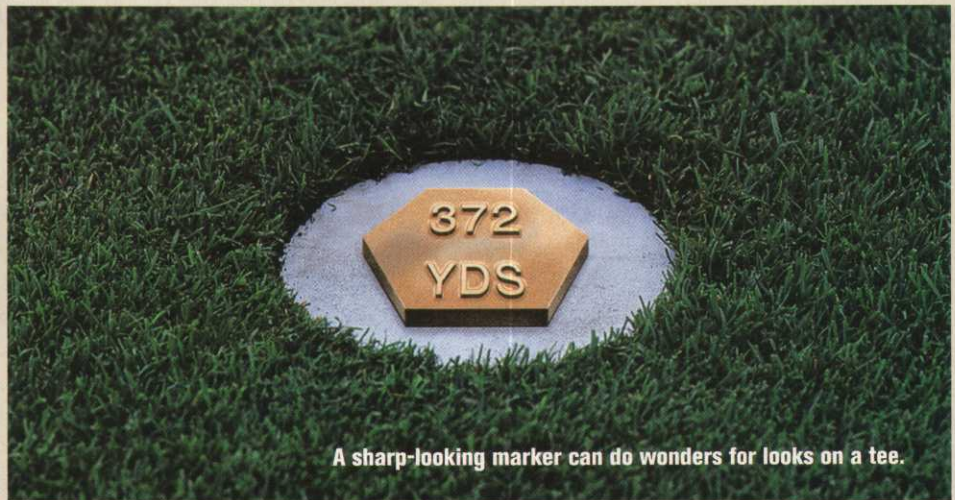
Many of the materials and most of the labor needed to improve tee areas can be supplied by the course. For example, rather than purchase tee markers, Gari Scherting uses mesquite branches, which are cut to size and painted the appropriate tee color on

### Challenge

You don't have a lot of money to invest, but your tees need a slight facelift. In order to spruce them up, you need to be creative with dollars and your thinking.

### Solution

There's a lot you can do that costs little or even no money. For instance, cutting down on "scatter" on a tee will make it more appealing visually. You can also buy new tee markers and use other inexpensive gadgets.



A sharp-looking marker can do wonders for looks on a tee.

STANDARD GOLF

the ends. "We cut new branches and redo those markers when we overseed every year," says the superintendent at the 45-hole Palm Valley GC in Goodyear, Ariz.

Buck Workman, superintendent at Catechee GC in Hartwell, Ga., makes tee markers by sawing off pieces of fence post 10 inches long, mitered on each side and painted on the ends.

"They are very inexpensive," Workman says. "You can buy one fence post for \$3 and get seven to eight tee markers out of it."

On his par-62, Hale Irwin-designed Short Course, Scherting saves money by overseeding just the tops of the tee areas in the fall rather than overseeding all of the walk-ups and approaches to the tees.

"It gives us a nice look in the winter and leaves less grass to maintain," says Scherting, who estimates his

savings at \$5,000 in labor and another \$200 in seed during the fall and winter months.

Organizing tees is one of the main things superintendents can do to give them a better look, says Par Aide Products President Steve Garske, who recommends finding a place near the tee where the trash can, ball washer and bench can be placed together. A rock base underneath these items provides an area for water and soap drippings to disappear rather than sitting on the ground, he says, noting that adding a planter or two will provide some color.

"Put them in a central place where

you can make sort of an oasis that is convenient to both walkers and riders," Garske suggests. "It's a nice approach rather than having things scattered all over the place. You'd be using the same equipment you already have. The only added expense would be clearing the spot and putting down some rock and a planter. A better-organized space also cuts down on mowing and the need to move equipment."

Workman places brick paving stones around the bottom of ball washers and tee signs.

"The brick work adds a tad of detail without overdoing it," he says. "I would compare it to whitewalls on tires. It adds a little something, but not too much. It's easy to install. You just go out

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**Broken tee caddies are becoming more popular, particularly on par-3 holes.**

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there with some sand and level the area. It also eliminates some of the trim work you might normally have to do around signs.”

Minimizing the amount of equipment is key, says Steve Tyler, western regional sales manager with Standard Golf. “Too much stuff on the tee box is simply not attractive, even though I sell product,” adds Tyler, who was a superintendent for 18 years before joining Standard Golf.

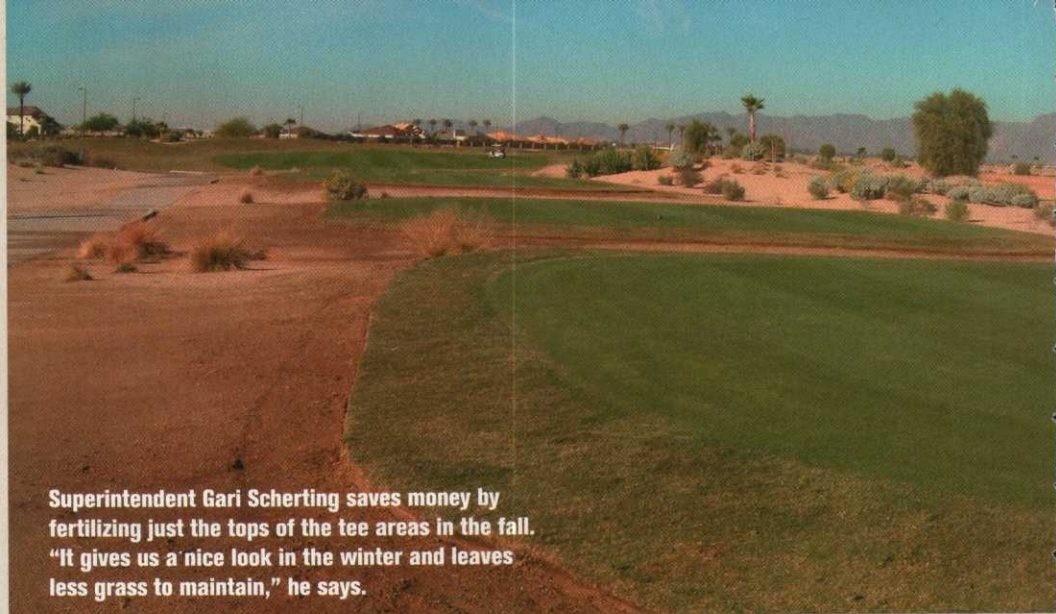
Tyler suggests mowing tees four times a week.

“Tees are as important as the putting surface when it comes to how they are trimmed,” he advises. “You can use a different striping pattern every few days to make your course look a little more professional. If you’re mowing parallel with the fairway one day, do the same with the tees. If you’re mowing across the fairway, then mow across the tees. Tee boxes should be uniform with the rest of the course.”

Like Garske, Tyler urges superintendents to keep all accessories clean.

“Change the soap and clean the ball washers three or four times a week,” Tyler says. “Change the tee towels three times a week. Disposable towels only cost about 10 cents apiece.

“Rather than just dumping the garbage, the receptacles should be brought in every couple of weeks and power-washed,” Tyler adds. “Just dumping them doesn’t get everything out, particu-



**Superintendent Gari Scherting saves money by fertilizing just the tops of the tee areas in the fall. “It gives us a nice look in the winter and leaves less grass to maintain,” he says.**

larly in the summer. It’s not the kind of thing that costs you a lot of money, just a little time.”

For ladies’ days or tournaments, Tyler suggests temporarily replacing the regular tee markers with small flower pots from local nurseries. Use a hole cutter and set the pot in the ground. The flowers can be given away at the luncheon or at the end of the event. “That’s always a big hit and gives you some color out there,” he adds.

Steve Swanson, superintendent at Siena GC in Las Vegas, needed to address the amount of play and inadequate size of some of his tee boxes. In the past year, he’s expanded or added six tees to improve playability. “To keep it affordable, we’ve done everything in-house, from design to construction to finding soil,” he said.

Previous agreements with course architects require many facilities to bring in the original designers to expand or build new tees, Swanson says. Siena had no such agreement, which saved a considerable sum in design expenses.

“This was the first time I

had constructed a tee box,” he says. “It’s not a difficult task. It’s really a matter of making sure the design blends with what the original designer had. That’s not something you can teach. It’s more a matter of feel.”

Sometimes superintendents need to purchase additional materials to spruce up their tees. But they don’t have to cost an arm and a leg.

Tour Golf of Wellington, Fla., sells in-ground, granite distance markers for \$25 apiece. Measuring 5 inches by 7 inches and buried 4 inches deep, they have a polished face with the yardage distance engraved on them. “Typically, we sell 90 to a course,” said Tour Golf representative Julianne Eubank. “That’s \$2,250. They are classy looking and last a long time. We sell bronze distance markers that are about double the price of granite.”

Standard Golf recently introduced a new distance marker made from recycled automobile tires that’s good for the environment, Tyler says. They come in different colors to designate different tees. They measure 8 inches in diameter and sit flush with the ground so they can be used on tees or fairways.

Those interested in environmental stewardship and saving money may be interested in Par Aide’s new water-cooler stations, trash receptacles and divot boxes made of recycled materials, according to Par Aide Sales Manager Dan Brown.

Standard Golf offers seven or eight different styles of tee markers. Prices range from \$6 to \$13, with personalized ones as much as \$20.

“Pick one that’s clean and easy to repaint annually or semiannually,” Tyler recommends. “The personalized ones should be cleaned every day. Courses don’t always take care of their accessories like they should. Some superintendents make their own tee markers, but you have to weigh the difference between what it costs you in time and materials vs. what it would cost to just buy them.”

Broken-tee caddies are becoming increasingly popular, particularly on par-3s, Tyler notes. Providing golfers with a place to deposit broken tees improves tee box appearance and can reduce mower damage. ■

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