

# GOLF COURSE TREE PROGRAM — Where Do You Start?

By Danny Quast  
Milwaukee Country Club

How important are your trees on your golf course? Too many times trees are secondary if not even thought about in the conscious mind of the Golf Course Superintendents. Here in Wisconsin, Dutch Elm has virtually eliminated every big tree on some courses leaving only 2½" to 3" trees to take their place. The loss of trees can destroy the character of a Golf Course.

How do we protect our valuable trees and still maintain high quality playing? Turf? First we must make the membership at your club understand the importance of their trees, and also make them realize that the perpetuation of a tree care program is vital to their club's future. Next we must realize that proper tree care can't be accomplished on a one day a week basis.

I feel any established club should have an arborist on it's staff. A man put on the same level as an assistant. In our case, the arborist is also responsible for the club house area, and has two people working under him, at peak season. The point I am trying to make is you, as a Superintendent, need a tree specialist able to identify and cope with tree problems, and doing something long before the problem is obvious to others. I feel the responsibilities of the arborist are as described in the following area.

## SAVE THE ELM

In our case it is the Elm, in other cases it may be a Maple or an Oak problem. The idea is the same. Let's do everything in our power to prolong the life of the big trees. In our part of the country many have the attitude—"We can't stop the Dutch Elm Disease, let's let them die, cut them down and get it over with, it's too expensive to fight." I for one do not concur with this thought. I feel every year we can prolong the life of an elm, it is one more year that a smaller tree is get-

ting larger. Can the elm really be saved? Let's face one fact. Trees as does every living thing, do not have the ability to achieve immortality.

We know we can prolong the life of a diseased tree. We know we can prevent Dutch Elm at a high percentage rate. We also realize it is almost a hopeless venture, when root graft is present. If preventive treatments are to do any good when there is a line or grouping of Elm, you must inject before any of the trees contact the disease, our arborist, Dennis Fermech has had our elm on a preventive program which started in 1976; his findings were that we had 76 new infections showing 12 carryover. In 1977, we had 21 carryovers and 8 new infections. These figures show that we had 2.5 times as many diseased trees and 9.5 times more new infections in 1976 than in 1977. Dennis stated in his yearly report, "Experiencing this type of results in the first year is very encouraging, since I did not expect to see any changes in the loss rate for at least two to three years after program inactment."

## PLANTING PROGRAM

Since coming to the Milwaukee Country Club we have planted over 1,000 trees, our loss rate has been minimal. The choosing of the location is the responsibility of the Golf Course Superintendent. Obviously he must choose the location as it relates to the game.

Once the location and species is decided upon it is Dennis' responsibility to see that the trees are planted, properly staked, wrapped, and pruned, so as the tree has the best chance for survival. All trees are planted with a tree spade which is hired with a operator from a local tree service. We have found it cheaper to plant with a tree spade than to have the trees bald and burlaped. Doing it this way you get larger trees for less money, plus you also save on labor. Each year a set dollar figure is established and we try to buy the best trees for the money.

## TRIMMING AND REMOVAL

I don't believe anything looks worse than a dead tree, or for that matter a partially dead tree on a course. To keep the golf course attractive, Dennis must stay after these removals. There are no

removals from key locations without permission from myself.

Any trees that are located near a green or building, are taken down by a professional tree service. Other than that Dennis handles it himself.

When trimming and removal are in the picture, the thing which must come to mind first is safety. Don't ask a tree man to work in a tree without: No. 1 — Knowledge of proper technique. No. 2 — Safety equipment, such as saddle with a scare strap, fiberglass ladder, and two 100 ft. ropes. These ropes should be replaced each year; your man's life depends on it. Good pruning tools and power saws are a must. The climber also should not work alone. The cost of the proper safety equipment adds up in dollars to about the cost of two large tree removals done by a professional service. To have a man on removals is a good investment, a professional service, charges between 200 and 500 dollars per tree, depending upon the size and location.

Once the tree is down and removed, the tree service will grind out the stump. The cleaning up and sodding of the remaining hole is turned over to the Golf Course Crew for completion.

## OUR MOST VALUABLE TREES

In my opinion, the most valuable trees are the smaller ones. As these trees mature they must be properly pruned, sprayed, and of course, fertilized. When a tree is kept pruned properly from the time it is planted to when it reaches maturity it will be healthier and more resistant to storm damage. Small trees, the club's investment in the future and if your club will maintain it's character into the next generation, strong emphasis must be placed on these trees today.

Proper timing is so critical to small tree development. From the time we place them into the ground, and as we watch them mature, proper care comes in hand with proper timing, just as it does in good turf management. You, as a superintendent and your arborist must be actually aware of this fact.

## THE TREE NURSERY

A tree nursery can save your club a considerable amount of money. Every year we purchase

about 100 trees at a cost of about \$1,000. These trees are 1" to 1½" in caliber. We try to get varieties that have shown good over the years plus maybe add 20 to a new variety. This is done so we may have a larger selection to place on the golf course in later years. For example, we have started London Plane tree this year. These trees are not really recommended in our locality, but we have put some on the course in previous years and it has proven to work out beyond our expectations.

A tree nursery should be somewhat sheltered and have water close by. The tree should be spaced so when it comes time to transplant on the course they can be moved with a tree space without disturbing the adjacent trees. The tree nursery should be cultivated or partially cultivated and kept mowed. Your arborist must keep a constant watch over these trees to ward off any diseases or insects that will hamper their establishment and future growth.

#### RECORD KEEPING

As you all well realize in turf management record keeping is paramount. We must record our day's activities, our finances, spray programs and cultural practices if we are to be a successful Superintendent. This also holds true when working with trees.

It must be the responsibility of the arborist to keep track of fertilization, tree removal, his own work, and that of the tree service. These records are so important when it comes time to approve the bills at the end of the month. Cost of tree services, just as other services are increasing and we must be able to justify the figures which appear on the monthly work sheets.

Records must be kept on the Elms in order to determine our loss rate and monitor our progress. Much information has come from record keeping in the fight against this disease. Past records have headed field researchers into investigating uptake and proper timing for preventive injections.

#### WHERE DO YOU FIND AN ARBORIST?

If you think you are going to find one at \$4.00 per hour, give up the search right now. You must ap-

preciate this person for what he is, a professional, and should be compensated for the knowledge and ability he must possess to do you the type of job that is necessary.

Dennis came from Milwaukee Area Technical College through the Forestry Department of River Hills. The community which the Milwaukee Country Club is located in. If I would start a search I would be contacting the University and top-notch Technical College, in a search for a qualified man, someone to continue this excellent program which has been established over these past years. Your arborist is an important part to the success of your job, and the physical assets of the club. Money, properly spent on your trees, starts with qualified personnel.

*Editor's Note: Danny H. Quast, CGCS, has been the Superintendent at Milwaukee Country Club since 1973.*

*His previous positions have been: Springfield Country Club, Springfield, Ohio 1968-1973; Troy Country Club, Troy, Ohio 1965-1968; and W.A. Cleary Corp. 1963-1965.*

*His professional accomplishments include: Member of CGSAA since 1963 — Certified March 15, 1976; Past President of*

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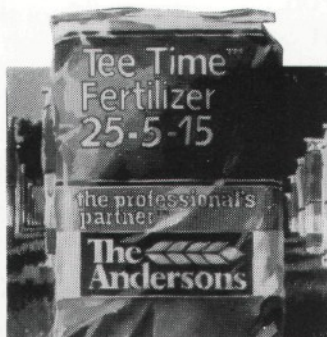
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