

When we power rake the traps we take out any rakes inside the traps and leave them, neatly, outside the sand traps. The shortcut in maintenance here is that the busy sand trap operator on his machine needn't waste time putting back the rakes after he finished power raking the traps. However, in those times when we use our triplex mowers around the sand traps, we place the rakes, which are out of the traps and in the way, back into the sand traps.

The shortcut in maintenance here is that the operator doesn't waste time taking the rakes out of the traps and laying, them out near the edge of the trap the way he found them, but instead, quickly, moves on to the next trap.

Now, when I send out some of my crew to hand rake the sand trap banks, I ask them to place the trap rakes half in and half out -- the way I like it.

Let me finish with this statement on traps. We still have too many golf architects who love to put in many and beautifully steeped traps that they never will have to rake. If the architects had shovels in their hands when they designed them, they wouldn't have made them so difficult to maintain. We don't have the labor to keep shoveling sand by hand on precipitous traps after every rain or after the night irrigation. At Briarwood, we reduced our maintenance by sodding the steepest sections of traps to keep the sand from constantly eroding.

## ROUGH

One of the best ways I know to cut down maintenance is to reduce the rough mowing and grooming in out-of-the-way golf course areas. These areas are around lakes and creek banks, in back of traps, in groves of trees, and in the mulching of every leaf that falls in autumn. Some of these areas never catch a golf shot, even a wild one.

I am sure all of you are acquainted with my views on overgrooming. I think we do too damn much of it. The desire to improve and to excel in the maintenance of our golf courses has been carried to a ridiculous and costly extreme. My contention is that if

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we did less grooming, the country clubs could save money and have a more challenging golf course and with fewer headaches.

Let's all of us here set aside next season some of the golf course land that doesn't come into play. Let's return it to the birds, rabbit, bees, and butterflies. Let's leave a little token preservation for Mother Nature's creatures, and then, as we walk through the long grass, let's stop and bend down to smell the wild flowers.

## TREES

One of the most time-consuming jobs on a golf course is mowing with hand rotary mowers around all trees that come into play. I have tried growth retardants without much success. So here is what I do now to shortcut this time-consuming and tedious job.

We no longer mow around trees every time the grass gets three or four inches high. We wait (despite some complaints) until it's almost a foot high before we do any mowing with rotary mowers. We set these as low as possible. We then rev up the engines and scalp the long grass to the very bottom -- we really knock it down.

The shock to the grass, especially if the weather is ideally hot, is so devastating that it keeps the grass down for many weeks. I wish it would be hot and dry for months instead of weeks; but alas, like unwanted grass coming up through our sidewalks when we can't get it to grow on the fairways, the grass around the trees never stays permanently damaged, but slowly comes back again.

By using our method, your mowing around the trees is reduced considerably. We also have noticed that when grass does come up again it is remarkably sparse and never as thick as before. Cutting grass around every tree whenever the grass grows a few inches higher than the rough does nothing but encourage and stimulate an even more vigorous growth. However, I must add that keeping the grass down on the opening hole and the tenth hole is a good idea. This enables the players to get away fast without having to lose time looking for lost balls in shaggy grass around trees on these opening holes.

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## MACHINERY

This is where it usually starts. Yes, TROUBLE!! If your equipment isn't working, you aren't going to be able to have many shortcuts in maintenance. You need the right tools and the right equipment, all in top working condition, to do the job properly.

So machinery up-keep is very important. You all know that. We also know that the best way to make sure that equipment is working properly is to check each one carefully a day or two or a week before using it. Expecting everything to start smoothly on the very day you are going to use it without first making sure it is ready is bad planning. Plan ahead and go over the equipment with the mechanic and also with the man who is going to operate it. If this, for some reason, is impossible to do, then have your mechanic come earlier in the morning to get everything ready for the job ahead.

I have a mechanic who checks out the machinery as soon as the operator comes in off the golf course. After checking it, he puts it away. But I also insist on something else. If there is something even slightly wrong, I ask the operator when he comes in to let the mechanic know about it immediately before it becomes a compound problem. Even the best mechanics, when they are busy (and because they are human), sometimes miss mechanical problems. I also explain carefully to all the operators that if anything goes wrong with their equipment to come in immediately and let the mechanic know the problem, or to call in from one of the four telephones we have placed strategically out on the golf course. I don't want them to persist in mowing or spraying or whatever with equipment that is being hindered by even a small mechanical problem. This will avoid ruining some delicate area with dull mowing blades, leaks, or other malfunction.

Sometimes new operators do that because they don't wish to waste time, are scared to come in, don't know better, or persist in finishing the job come hell or high water. No operator should ever be sent out unless he is thoroughly familiar with the machine, or has had explained to him a few of the major things that suddenly might go wrong with the equipment he is

using. The operator also must be assured, if you are a good boss, that he won't be ridiculed or scolded because he does come in, or if he calls you for help when there is really nothing wrong but in his opinion there was a question and a doubt. Pat him on the back instead.

I have prevented many major equipment breakdowns and saved lots of money for the club by this one simple rule for the crew: Stop if you think something doesn't sound or look right, and then call me or the mechanic right away. This can be a real shortcut in maintenance, believe me. I do one other thing -- shortcut -- to safeguard our equipment and to make sure the golf course jobs are done properly. Immediately after the equipment goes out in the morning the mechanic takes his tools and goes out to personally check and see if his equipment is running smoothly. He does that again in the afternoon.

## CREW

Unless you have a well-trained crew that is knowledgeable about the game of golf, your efforts to run a classy golf course are going to be diminished. One thing I do at Briarwood, and which has been a tremendous shortcut in crew training, is to take them to the Western Open every year in June. And then in the fall, at Briarwood, we have a Mexican Open golf tournament. The Mexican Open is not only a farewell fiesta to some of my wonderful greenskeepers, who go back to Texas for the winter, but also an opportunity for them to learn more about golf by playing in a tournament held especially for them. This has been a great shortcut for me for better labor production, because in knowing the game of golf the crew members realize the reasons for the many things we must do to keep the golf course in topnotch condition for our members. They are now far more enthusiastic and attentive in their work, and prouder of their status on the golf course no matter how menial the job might be. They are "professionals." Allowing them to play golf has been an outstanding benefit to our members, and a great employee-employer relationship for me. They plan on Mondays after work, at which time we allow crew members with five years seniority or more to use carts. Crew members who stay and live on the grounds are allowed to play a few holes ever evening when the members are off the holes near my shop.

But let's face it. There has to be some other incentive besides letting them play golf to having a well-trained and disciplined crew. **I am talking about money.** We try to keep up, not only with other outstanding golf courses, as far as wages go, but also with allied professions such as nurseries, landscapers, lawn and garden maintenance companies, and so on. I try to give my workers a cost-of-living bonus every year in the labor budget.



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Our members are very aware of my excellent golf course crew and realize their value, and the long-standing loyalty of the men, and this also helps me put my labor budget across.

### **SOD FOR GREENS**

I have a beef with some sod growers, and I think it's legitimate. The sod growers misrepresent their so-called "sod for greens" because in our area it is never even close to the height we would like it to be for transplanting onto the greens. Maybe for fairways, but for greens, never. It sometimes is even too high for the tees. What they call green sod is usually delivered 3/8 to 1/2 inch high from the nursery, and it takes a whole season or more to get it down to the putting green height we maintain on the established greens.

Evidently the growers have reasons for keeping it that high. But if that's the case, then the sod nurseries should not call it sod for greens, and definitely should not list it for sale unless it's closer to the height at which most of us mow our greens.

The problem with high new green sod is that when you bring it down too soon after transplanting, you either lose it or it is scalped to such a degree that *Poa annua* or disease takes over the shocked and weakened areas. The shortcut to sod for greens is by taking the long way around, which is to grow a sod nursery for greens yourself, and I am sure most of you here are doing just that. But the nursery has to be large enough and mowed low enough that if you suddenly have to resod one of your greens, the sod from your

nursery can be swiftly transplanted and be in play within a month or less, with putting as smooth as the rest of your greens.

### **GREEN CHAIRMEN AND BOARD MEMBERS**

I want to say that it's wonderful to have all the young men from colleges, to have them come into our great profession. But I seriously believe that we have an overproduction of young talent. Too many young men are underqualified and they are going for low, low salaries, undercutting the more qualified people who should be getting the top jobs in our profession.

The final shortcut that I wish to mention is for the ears of green chairmen and board members. The supreme shortcut to your golf course problems is a qualified and experienced golf course superintendent. And they, like a good golf professional and a good club manger, don't come cheap. Sadly and incredibly, some clubs look only at how cheaply they can get a superintendent and not how good he is.

To all the young men sitting in the audience, let me lay it on you straight. All your degrees and diplomas, all your microscopes and thermometers won't be worth much to you, to our great profession, and to the clubs you seek to work for unless you first get some practical experience from a qualified superintendent. Books, equipment, and all the degrees in the world are not going to help if you cannot show a man how to use a rake and shovel properly -- and learn how to work with the Almighty.

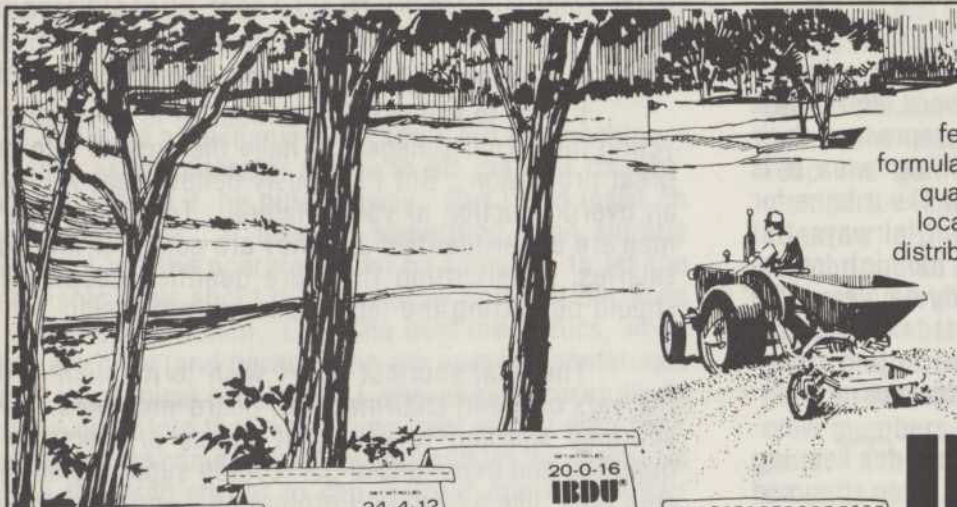


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The knowledge that is gained through continued education and experience in turfgrass maintenance should be openly shared with mutual trust and comradarie among fellow members. To strive for further and continued knowledge and excellence in all phases of golf course maintenance is our ambition. The Proud legacy of our profession depends upon the pride and integrity which each individual takes within himself.