



Are There Too Many Trees On Your Golf Course?



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THE SHADY EXPANSE OF TREES THAT FRAMES A CLUBHOUSE OR SERVES AS A BACKDROP TO THE FIRST TEE CAN BE ONE OF THE 'SIGNATURE' LOOKS FOR A CLUB.

On the golf course, though, large blocks of shade and the accompanying tree root systems can be detrimental to healthy turf, and if you've proposed a tree removal program at your club, chances are you've run into some opposition.

People like trees; it's against our nature to see them cut down. How do you ensure a tree is an asset to the club rather than a negative influence on golf course conditions?

A golf course architect is a great resource when it's time to examine tree management at a golf course. Having

an outside expert who objectively evaluates how trees impact your course, from the standpoint of design strategy, playability, maintenance, turf health and aesthetics, can give your superintendent the support they need when proposing changes.

While you're investigating whether to undertake a tree management program, here are some guidelines to consider:

Allow for vital air movement and exposure to sunlight. Poor air circulation, specifically on greens, results in soaring temperatures and humidity during the summer, that in turn, promotes ideal conditions for disease development. Dense shade throughout the year produces cooler soil temperatures in the shaded areas.

Lower temperatures retard turf growth rate, leaving grass vulnerable to damage from wear and compaction. Where poor air circulation and restricted sunlight penetration cause unacceptable turf loss, tree removal is necessary, especially at greens and tees.

A blockade of trees is not a substitute for careful routing. No matter how many trees are planted to protect players on an adjacent hole, the odds are a wayward shot will find its way through the canopy. If the intent is to protect players in adjacent fairways, plant trees of appropriate mature shape, size and density near the tees in strategic locations.

The physical and psychological impact of the trees will reduce the number of errant shots going off-line. Leave gaps between adjacent fairways near the landing areas to allow players with stray shots to have a probable chance for a "scrambling" recovery.

Keep trees well away from greens and tees – they out-compete turfgrass for available water and nutrients. The idea that tree roots do not extend further from the trunk than the drip line of the tree is just not true. The reality is, from the trunk, tree roots can reach one to one-and-a-half times, or more, the total height of the tree.

Where tree roots are a problem, sever them with a trencher specifically designed for root pruning. These machines make clean pruning cuts. Respect the base of the tree by pruning no closer to the trunk than five times the diameter of the trunk.

