



September 9, 2011 -- Volume 49, Number 36

Common Sense Cart Paths

Between the rains in the East and the drought in the South, cart paths have never been more important to courses. Now is the time to plan for improving your path system.

by [David A. Oatis](#), director, Northeast Region

As a Green Section agronomist who sees more than 100 golf courses each year, I believe that the vast majority of cart path projects do not accomplish their most basic objectives, which are to minimize wear problems and improve aesthetics. This truly is one of the most overlooked areas in golf course maintenance.

Although there are more than a few ugly cart paths in existence, I contend that they all have one or more of several characteristics in common: poor design, construction, or location. Traffic from golfers and their carts can make it impossible to grow healthy turf, and the resulting worn turf and rutted or bare soil is unattractive and provides a poor playing surface. Rules problems also can result. Under the Rules of Golf, relief cannot be granted unless the area is marked "ground under repair" or is deemed to be a part of the road or path and is so marked. When these situations occur in high-play areas, definition and marking complications ensue.

Aside from the remedial cultural programs that can be employed to minimize the effects of traffic on turf, there are two basic ways of handling traffic successfully: channel the traffic on hard, impervious surfaces or spread it out over as large an area as possible. Although these concepts may seem elementary, it is more complicated when the prospect of making a transition from one method to the other is considered. Somewhere along the line, concentrated wear usually occurs. If a continuous system of paths is not to be installed, or if golfers will be allowed to venture off the paths, provisions must be made for getting the carts on and off



Without curbing, many golfers simply cannot resist the temptation to avoid walking the extra few feet to the tee.



the paths without causing excessive wear at those locations. The paths themselves must be wide enough and durable enough to withstand traffic and retain definition without being a burden to the maintenance staff and the budget. They also must be designed in such a way as to be easily used by the golfers, but they must not be so obtrusive as to affect playability adversely. The project is getting a bit more complicated now, isn't it?

Although we don't recommend this, at least golfers might be inclined not to park on the side of the tee when they can park in the middle of it. You don't even have to get out of the cart to hit your tee shot!

[Read the rest of this article](#)

On Course *With Nature*

Cooperative Wildflowers at Lakeside Country Club

by [Joshua Conway](#), *Education and Communications Manager, Audubon International*

The word *Cooperative* is often an overlooked aspect of the program name: Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. However, cooperation is vital to Audubon International's approach to environmental stewardship. We are always delighted when members share stories of engaging the surrounding community to improve the environment where they live, work, and play. One such story resulted from the 2010 Managed Land Survey to establish a designated wildflower area at Lakeside Country Club in Houston, Texas. As a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1995, Lakeside Country Club has a long-standing commitment to the environment. What makes this story unique is that the idea for the wildflower area project was conceived at an environmental field

day at Kingwood Country Club, another Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.



From March to June the course comes alive with color from the wildflowers near the #3 green.

"After speaking to the owner of Wildseed Farms of Fredricksburg, Texas, we decided to try to establish a designated wildflower area between two lakes on our property," stated Dee Dee Hutcherson, horticulturalist for Lakeside Country Club. Formerly, the area between the two lakes was an unsightly area of the golf course that was prone to erosion and very visible from the #3 green and the #4 tee box. "I wanted to see if wildflowers would really grow in the area and if members would notice," Hutcherson relays.

The area was prepared by mowing it to a height of 0.25 inch in October. Following a visit from Tom Kramer, botanist from Wildseed Farms, a seed mix was selected that was native to Southeastern Texas and would do well in full sun with no irrigation. The mix included: Texas Bluebonnet, Indian Blanket, Scarlet Flax, Tickseed, Lemon Mint,

Coneflower, Larkspur, Cosmos, African Daisy, Coreopsis, Black-eyed Susan, Toadflax, Primrose, Mexican Hat, Indian Paintbrush and Tall Poppy Mallow. Seed was then mixed with sand and spread with a walk-behind rotary spreader in two directions - from east to west and then north to south. Spreading the seed in this manner was crucial to maintain even seed cover. After that, the only thing left was to communicate with the Lakeside Country Club membership to let them know what to expect in the spring.

[Read the rest of this article to learn how the project turned out](#)

All Things Considered - A Green Section Point of View

Getting Back In Balance

by [John H. Foy](#), director, Florida Region



Over the past three to four decades, golf course maintenance has greatly benefited from the American free enterprise system, technological advances, and abundant available resources. Along with a rapid increase in the number of golf courses in the United States, tremendous strides have been made in the level of course conditioning and quality provided at both private and daily-fee facilities. This certainly has been the case in Florida, and by the mid 2000s there were more than 1200 golf courses and the standards of course conditioning and quality had been raised to incredible heights.

And then the bubble popped

An economic recession and the collapse of the housing industry have been especially hard to golf in Florida because of its close ties with tourism and real estate development. However, in hindsight, it is now apparent that growth projections were overly optimistic and supply exceeded demand in many locations. A market correction and reduction in the supply of courses has been occurring as a normal function of a free enterprise system. The closing of golf courses is unfortunate, but necessary for getting back in balance and having better utilization of the remaining facilities.

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Regional Updates



North-Central Region

by [R. A. \(Bob\) Brame](#), director

One Plus One Equals Three

Golf course visits over the last few weeks have confirmed that this season's harsh weather pattern has resulted in significant and widespread weakening of golf turf. However, it actually goes back one step further. The 2011 season has been intensified by the challenges of the 2010 season. Almost like one plus one equals three.

The 2010 season resulted in significant weakening and loss of golf turf, especially cool-season rough. A prolonged dry fall prevented recovery efforts. The extended 2011 wet spring further compromised turf recovery efforts and weakened rooting into the summer. Summer high temperatures kicked in, which included nighttime temperatures that did not allow plants to recoup from daytime heating, and many sites experienced excessive rain. Add it all together and the result was an intensified turf weakening beyond what a single harsh season alone would generate. Until a fall-spring growth cycle accommodates the needed recovery and strengthening of cool-season turf the multiplying will continue.

The quickest way to take out cool-season golf turf is the combination of hot temperatures and wet conditions. A saturated root zone compromises the plant's ability to cool itself during daytime heating and, as a result, wilt sets in. Wet wilt is virtually impossible to mitigate. The key to preventing wet wilt is maximizing surface water runoff and the internal movement of water down into the root zone. This emphasizes the importance of drainage, topdressing, and aeration, but they must be done in advance of challenging weather.

[Read the rest of this update](#)



Mid-Atlantic Region

by [Keith Happ](#), senior director

Take Some Time to Reevaluate the Golf Course Maintenance Programs

As we move toward fall golf course superintendents are implementing recovery programs to rejuvenate the turf. Many greens in the Mid-Atlantic Region are weak and have experienced severe stress this season. Core aeration and topdressing strategies may not be enough. You may need to rethink how the surfaces are prepared for daily play. A maintenance standards document can define how the golf course will be prepared under various weather scenarios.

The pursuit of green speed can cause serious problems. More specifically, it can weaken the turf reducing its ability to tolerate harsh environmental conditions. The weather conditions experienced the last two summers have been very difficult and, after examining turf during Turf Advisory visits over the last two seasons, one thing is clear. When golf course superintendents have been able to "play defense" at the right time of the year, the turf has survived. Adjusting procedures to sustain the turf rather than focusing solely on green speed can make a significant difference. The Green Committee, Golf Committee and golf course superintendent should be on the same page with course set-up in times of severe turf stress. Playing defense should be an element of the golf course maintenance standards document.

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by the *USGA Green Section Staff*

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Green Section Record (ISSN 2156-5813) is published weekly via electronic mail by the United States Golf Association©, Golf House, Far Hills, NJ 07931.