

NEWSLETTER

August, 1980



Golf Course Superintendents Association
OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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Can Those Negative Thoughts

Roy Mackintosh, whose expert hand has guided the grooming and greening of the Twin Hills Country Club (Longmeadow, Mass.) for the past several years, has a gripe with the Newsletter. And it probably is legitimate...even we of the written word are open to justified criticism.

"Too much of the articles I read are coated with negative thinking and negative philosophy," Mackintosh claims. "I know that the superintendent's life is no bowl of cherries. However, everything isn't as bad as you make it sound. There's a time and place for sour grapes. But it shouldn't dominate our relationship with club officials and club members."

Mackintosh makes a lot of sense in that statement. All too often the superintendent assumes that bad blood exists between himself and members, almost before the very inking of a serious confrontation.

One of the specifics Roy mentioned was the comparisons certain superintendents hear from members and the alarming reaction to them. "It's only natural that members are going to compare the condition of their golf course with others," Mackintosh reveals. "In a way, this is something of a plus for our profession because in noting the condition of someone else's course, the members are expressing an interest in the maintenance procedures of their superintendent."

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else's course, the members are expressing an interest in the maintenance procedures of their superintendent"

Mackintosh is not immune to comparisons, either. "I've been doing double takes here at Twin Hills because we have many fine golf courses in the area," he tells. "But I don't let them upset me to the point where all I do is complain about the comments. What I do is confront the member and have it out with him."

This lead Mackintosh to the real theme of his observations. "It all boils down to lack of communication between the superintendent and the members," he explains. "I've always made it one of my prime goals to establish rapport with my members. Not only do I accept their criticism, I solicit it."

Mackintosh says that he seeks to find out what the members think is wrong about his course's condition. "I ask them all kinds of questions as to how the course is playing," he continues. "After all, they're the ones who play the course. We groom it and unless we have an opportunity to see it from a player's standpoint, we really don't have a clue as what it really should be like."

It should be inserted that Mackintosh does command more than the ordinary amount of respect and recognition from his members. He has, in fact, been placed in charge of the entire golf operation at Twin Hills. In effect, he runs the show.

"But that doesn't take away from the basic description of my job input," he stresses. "I've been a superintendent from day one of my affiliation with Twin Hills. It's not one of those 'in name only' deals. I'm a working superintendent and I'm proud of it. And others in the profession should be, too."

Mackintosh discloses that he makes it part of his daily routine to make himself visible when members are playing the course.

"I think that too many of us (superintendents) tend to do the job and then hide from the members," he says. "It's almost as if we're living in hopes that each day will pass with no one offering a complaint or constructive suggestion. That's what I call negative job existence. It has to come back and haunt us."

There is solid meat between both ends of Mackintosh's feelings. It is a rare day, indeed, when the Newsletter hears of any positive factor entering and enhancing the daily life of the golf course superintendent. Most of the comments—as few as they have strangely been—linger over the unpleasantries of the profession.

"I'm sure that many of the superintendents have been accorded some form of praise along the way," Mackintosh interjects. "The way I see it the image of the superintendent has been on an upswing for the last 10 years. This is because the country club member has been made aware of the complex nature of conditioning a course. Now, many of them are beginning to appreciate just how monumental a task our job can be. That's a positive step in itself."

Continued on page 2.

Next Meeting

Norton C.C.

August 5, 1980

Directors Meeting 10:00 A.M.

Regular Meeting 11:00 A.M.

Lunch 12:00 Noon

Golf 1:00 P.M.

Reservations for lunch must be in by Aug. 1.

Directions: From route 95 take route 140 in Mansfield to route 123. Go right in Norton center. Take second right which is Oak Street. Club is 1 1/2 miles on left.

Is Stagnation Your Problem?

How long have you been on your present job?

Is it beginning to get dull? Do you have the feeling that every day passes without a challenge...a new adventure? Do you think the superintendent down the street or on the other side of town lives a much more exciting and rewarding job life than you?

If the answers to the above questions come out a ringing "yes", you might find yourself in a position where stagnation is setting in. It's up to you to stop it, before it becomes acute.

Of course, the consummate remedy for this "down" feeling is to change jobs. Don't get alarmed at the suggestion. Sometimes a change of scenery, a departure from a deep-seated daily routine can turn life as a golf course superintendent into reborn euphoria.

Even the thought of being fired from your present position isn't all that deplorable and degrading. There have been examples of men in the profession benefitting from the indignation of receiving a pink slip. In many cases, they have gone on to bigger, better and more enjoyable things.

Recently, in a geographical triangle embracing the corners of Massachusetts and Connecticut, a strange transition took place. One superintendent was dismissed from his job at an established club because his course had fallen upon hard-conditioned times. In his place came an enthusiastic young man from another part of the country. And, you guessed it. He pulled a minor miracle by lifting the course to triple-A playing condition.

But what about the deposed super? He, too, found a new life and a job which made demands on his sleeping talents. For some reason, he jumped into it with renewed vigor and determination with the result that his new course is the talk of the town in regard to impeccable playing condition.

Stagnation, then, can serve as a stimulus for those superintendents who are wearing with the familiarity of job location and the people occupying it.

One Superintendent, who found himself leaning toward a daily grind at the office, reports that he corrected it with do-it-yourself projects. Of course, he couldn't attempt them without consulting his superiors. But once he did, he was like a new colt bolting out of the barn on its first run.

As a matter of fact, do-it-yourself projects have become very popular...not only with superintendents fighting the blahs but with these who are thrust into economic-minded situations.

The stagnation threat disappeared for one super who decided that he had the knowledge and motivation to tackle the

transformation of a manual irrigation system into an automatic one.

"I set a qualified goal of three years to complete the job," he revealed. "But it wasn't that strict so that I would hold myself to it. I wanted to have some guidelines for progress, so I projected completion of the work to three years from the start."

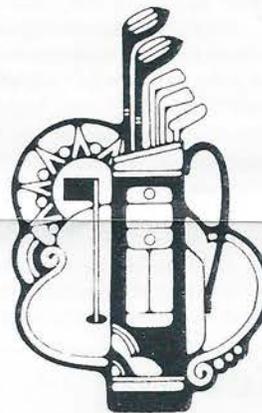
At first, his members were wary of such a huge undertaking. "But I convinced them that it would be in their best financial interests to give it a try," he told. "When they heard that an outside agency would do the job for \$160,000, my figure of a straight \$60,000 popped their eyes and I got the go-ahead signal."

Now, the super is in the middle of the project and having himself an interesting experience. "The members realize that having the job spread out will inconvenience them on the course more than they would if they hired somebody else," he disclosed. "When I told of future savings in manpower (there are two fulltime employees on the irrigation guns at night), they became more enthused about it. It's quite a challenge for me. But I think it's just what I needed to get out of the rut I was in."

Naturally, there are those superintendents who don't allow stagnation to set in. "I wouldn't have time to let this job get dull," one cracked. "I have enough work lined up for me over the next five years to keep me thinking and hopping all the time. But, I can see where some people could slow down to a walk and become drags on their initiative."

So, don't think your value as a superintendent is coming to an end just because life at your job is developing an annoying sameness. You don't have to pack it in and look for greener pastures; nor do you have to wait to be asked to change your address. Stagnation is not fatal, if you discover its symptoms early enough and do something about them. But...it's up to you...again.

GERRY FINN



**Congratulations to -
Richard Duggan, Maynard C.C.
Voted in as associate member.**

**To be voted on at the next meeting -
Andrew S. Parcheski, Saddle Hill C.C.
John J. Sullivan, Charles River C.C.**

Continued from page 1.

Mackintosh concludes by repeating his emphasis on the importance of communication between superintendent and member. "I wish all supers would give it a try," he winds it up. "Get everything out in the open is the best way to express it. And pretty soon there'll be some smiling faces around the maintenance buildings. I'm just sick and tired of hearing sour grapes. Everything can't be as bad as I've been reading in the Newsletter. Thanks for the soap box."

And thank you, Roy, for the worthwhile comments.

GERRY FINN

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Tree Selection

By Roger Funk, Ph.D.

Vice President, Research and Development, The Davey Tree Expert Company, Kent, Ohio

Proper plant selection is an important factor both from the standpoint of maintenance and appearance. The need for future maintenance can be reduced while at the same time the aesthetic value of the landscape can be improved by following a few basic principles of plant selection.

Trees should be obtained from a reputable nursery and be reliably hardy in the area. They should be tolerant of the prevalent soil conditions and resistant to any major insect and disease pests.

Other maintenance factors that should be considered are strong branch and crotch formation; maximum height and width; and rate and habit of growth. Trees which do not produce strong wood or those which quickly outgrow their allotted space will require a disproportionate amount of pruning and corrective surgery.

After considering the factors affecting survival and maintenance, attention should be given to ornamental characteristics such as foliage, flowers and fruit. The impact and the length of time these characteristics are a feature in the landscape can be helpful in determining plant selection and site location.

Selection and Care of Low Maintenance Trees for Golf Courses

Trees and large shrubs are important assets on golf courses and other large areas. Trees offer shade, create sight barriers and accents, enhance landscape aesthetics and value, and constitute major features in the use of an area.

The uses for trees on a golf course include defining and lining fairways, serving as a background to a green or separating greens from trees. Trees are used in fairways as yard markers, to create hazards in rough areas, to provide shade for golfers or to screen a green, service road, building or work area. In addition to these and other functional uses, trees are used to beautify a course to add attractiveness in the form of foliage, flowers, fruits and growth habit. Many of the great golf courses are remembered not so much for their degree of difficulty but rather for the beauty of their landscape.

Trees have a financial as well as functional and aesthetic value. The International Society of Arboriculture has established the value of trees at \$18 per square inch cross section of trunk modified by species, condition and location. As long as trees are kept growing in a healthy condition the value of trees increases annually.

Trees for the golf course should be selected, planted, and maintained with these thoughts in mind.

Planting

Proper planting procedures are essential for the health and survival of even the best adapted and most carefully selected trees. Post-planting cultural care such as watering, fertilizing and pruning seldom compensates for poor planting.

The planting pit should be dug wide enough and deep enough to accommodate all the roots without crowding. Bent or twisted roots may develop into girdling roots which, as they grow in thickness, press against the base of the trunk and restrict the movement of water and dissolved minerals and nutrients.

Trees should be planted at the same depth they grew originally or planted slightly higher in heavy soils where drainage is poor. Drainage tiles can also be installed under or adjacent to tree planting sites in poorly drained soils to improve the air:water ratio. Deep planting or heavy soils can prevent sufficient oxygen reaching the living cells in the lower roots which may not function properly and die. Since the root system was reduced during the digging operation, any additional losses may result in the death of the entire tree.

Backfill or soil to be placed in the hole around the roots or soil ball should provide the best possible condi-

tions for new root growth. Improving the soil removed from the planting pit usually gives better results than introducing a totally different soil type. Organic matter at a rate of one-third of the volume of soil is recommended as a general conditioner for most soils.

A soil test is recommended prior to planting to determine proper treatments to correct nutritional deficiencies and soil pH.

Phosphorus is relatively non-mobile in soils and is much easier to incorporate before planting. If a soil test is not available, a general recommendation is to add 10 lbs./cu. yd. of 5-10-5 or similar high phosphorus fertilizer to the backfill. Newly transplanted trees will also benefit from the nitrogen and potassium found in complete fertilizers, although trees are more sensitive to over-fertilization at this time because of the limited root system.

The soil pH determines nutrient availability and is optimum for most plants between 6 and 7. Values below 6 usually require the addition of lime while those above 7 may need to be treated with sulfur to correct soil reaction.

Fertilization

Trees, like turf, must have sufficient fertilizer for proper growth and development.

In the urban and suburban environment, the natural recycling of nutrients is disrupted as leaves are raked and removed. In addition, trees planted in association with Man are subjected to a number of stress conditions such as air pollution, soil compaction, grade level changes and mechanical wounding that further contribute to decline. Proper fertilization helps restore the nutrient balance in the soil which enables the tree to maintain vigor and increase insect and disease resistance.

Since trees on a golf course are usually growing in a turf area, fertilizer should be placed in the tree root zone under the sod. This helps encourage deep tree roots and minimizes the potential for rapid, succulent turf growth or burn.

Fertilizer can be injected as a soluble or liquid suspension from a sprayer through a soil probe or placed in vertical holes drilled under the branch spread. Trees should be fertilized with a complete fertilizer (3:1:1 ratio) on a regular program every two years at a rate of six pounds nitrogen per 1000 square feet of root area. Annual applications are preferable where optimum growth is a major consideration.

Timing of application is more important with quick-release than with slow-release fertilizers, particularly those containing nitrogen.

Fertilizers such as ureaformaldehyde release nitrogen over a period of several months to one or more years. Because of this relatively continuous supply of nutrients, slow-release fertilizers have a low burn potential and promote uniform growth. Quick-release fertilizers, however, are usually leached from the root zone within a few months and are best applied in late fall or early spring to obtain the maximum results.

Pruning

Proper pruning to prevent or correct undesirable growth is another important part of a maintenance program.

Early corrective pruning can eliminate narrow and weak crotches, improve the symmetry of the branching structure or remove the lower branches where clearance is desired under trees.

In a regular maintenance program, attention should be given to removal of dead, diseased or broken branches; thinning to reduce shade or wind resistance; and removal of branches interfering with buildings or traffic.

Pruning cuts should be made flush with a branch where the removed branch originates. This is known as **thinning** and results in a natural appearance and allows the wound to "heal" properly. If stubs are left, they will

eventually die and provide a breeding ground for insects and diseases. Pruning cuts made just above a lateral bud (that is, **heading back**) is acceptable and, at times, necessary when pruning smaller branches but care should be taken to retain the original shape of the tree.

Trees should be inspected periodically and other maintenance such as watering, mulching and insect and disease control provided when necessary. Failure to provide a regular maintenance and inspection program can result in unhealthy trees and unnecessary losses. Removal, replacement and renovation are expensive and never as satisfactory as having established trees in the landscape that increase in beauty, function and value every year.

Some Recommended Trees for Golf Courses

The following list provides a selection of various sizes of deciduous and evergreen trees that are usually pest free and are hardy in Zone 3. Consult local nurseries for additional selections.

Viburnum prunifolium — **Blackhaw**: A plant 15 feet in height with an oval form. The deciduous foliage turns a shining red color in autumn. Creamy white flowers in May are followed by bluish-black berries in September. It is an excellent plant as a specimen or massing and is often substituted for hawthorns since it has the same shape and is free of pests.

Viburnum lentago — **Nannyberry**: A vigorous, dense plant that will attain a height of 30 feet. The leaves turn purplish-red in autumn and the red berries attract birds. It makes a good screen and the old branches arch over and root where they touch the ground, if allowed.

Phellodendron amurense — **Amur Cork Tree**: A wide spread, vigorous tree with a height of 30 feet. Small, whitish flowers in panicles in early June are followed by clusters of round, black berries in autumn only on the pistillate plants (sexes are separate). The yellow autumn color is only of passing interest since the leaves drop quickly. It produces light shade and is particularly interesting in winter because of the massive branches and interesting bark.

Carpinus caroliniana — **American hornbeam or Ironwood**: An excellent tree for a small place that reaches a height of 36 feet. The delicately shaped leaves, orange to red autumn color, pendulous clusters of fruits and "muscle" trunk tend to make it of considerable interest throughout the entire year. Unfortunately, the hornbeam is not too easily transplanted.

Populus alba — **White Poplar**: A good specimen tree for large areas, this Poplar is wide-spreading and achieves a height of 90 feet. The upper side of leaves is grayish green and the underside a contrasting white which is very pubescent. Foliage turns reddish in the fall although not as pronounced as in maples. The columnar variety is a good substitute for Lombardy Poplar.

Juniperus virginiana glauca — **Silver Red-cedar**: One of the best colored forms of this evergreen species, this plant is a narrowly columnar tree 15 to 20 feet tall. The silvery blue color of the foliage is brightest in the spring, gradually turning silvery green in the summer.

Juniperus virginiana — **'Elegantissima'** — **Goldtip Red-cedar**: This plant is usually not over 20 feet tall at maturity and has a pyramidal growth habit. The branchlets are tipped with golden yellow which turns a good bronze color in fall providing contrast in this evergreen species.

Chamaecyparis pisifera — **Sawara False Cypress**: A variable evergreen species with many recommended varieties, it will achieve a height of 150 feet. The older trees tend to lose lower branches requiring annual pruning but it is hardy and remarkably free of insects and diseases. The brownish-red, shedding bark is an interesting feature of older plants.

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