The Fall Harvest

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The magnificent trees at the Country Club of Rochester are a course treasure, but course officials realize that some trees must be removed because of their effects on nearby turf.

WHAT'S WORSE than not having enough trees on a golf course? The answer: having too many trees on the course.

Golf course superintendents at older courses in many parts of the country know this. They see the problems caused by shade on greens, tees, and other important turf areas, and they recognize that poor air circulation is a major factor involved in disease activity, drainage problems, compaction, and other forms of turf decline. Tree roots, too, rob the turf of moisture and nutrients and complicate irrigation and drainage programs. Trees too close together make it necessary to use time-consuming small equipment for mow-

ing purposes. And mowing around low-branching species often requires hand mowing work or the use of small riding equipment.

Too many trees can also affect the play of the course. They can encroach on play off the tee, forcing golfers to one side of the tee or the other. Trees can unreasonably block play across the corner of a dogleg, where a sand bunker would be a better choice. Surface roots can be a nuisance for golfers and for maintenance equipment and golf carts. And too many trees can be a factor in slow play.

Golf course superintendents have come to recognize some of the concerns about trees, but the same cannot be said

of most golfers, who generally view trees as sacred. One course, however, where the superintendent and club officials agree on the need to control the problems caused by too many trees is the Country Club of Rochester, in New York state. Hundreds of trees have been planted on this old Donald Ross course over the years, many of which were pines planted about 25 to 30 feet apart. As the trees grew, superintendent Bob Feindt recognized that many of them were becoming overcrowded and were affecting their own growth and that of the nearby turf.

Feindt's first hint of a serious problem was encountered on the 7th green, which was surrounded by trees. A

combination of shade and poor air circulation made it very difficult to maintain good quality turf on this green during the summer. On the recommendation of the USGA Green Section, the club agreed to remove several trees. The next season the turf on this green improved, and the club decided to remove several more trees and to follow through with some pruning work.

Upon seeing the significant improvement of the turf on the 7th green, the club began to look at other areas of the course where too many trees might be having a negative impact on turf quality. The superintendent, golf professional, green committee chairman, and several other committee members got together, toured the course, and selected trees for removal or pruning. For example, if an evergreen tree was crowding a good hardwood specimen, the evergreen was marked for removal. The results were great, and the tour of the course for the purpose of tree evaluation became an annual event known as "The Fall Harvest."

Most of the actual tree pruning and removal work is scheduled for the winter months. The trees are removed, the stumps are ground up, the holes are filled with soil, and seed or sod is used to restablish turf. By doing the work during the winter and cleaning up thoroughly, the die-hard tree lovers don't miss the trees. One winter 42 trees were removed, ranging in diameter from 3 inches to 36 inches, and nobody said a negative word about it the following season.

The removal of trees that cause turf problems is really not so unusual on golf courses today; it's the attitude of the club and its officials that is unusual. Here is a club that respects and values its trees, yet it is willing to look at them with a critical eye and remove those that no longer play a positive role on their course. That is an attitude that every club should emulate.

Superintendent Bob Feindt and committee select trees to be removed in their "Fall Harvest."