

must also be provided or this bunker will be a pond every time it rains.

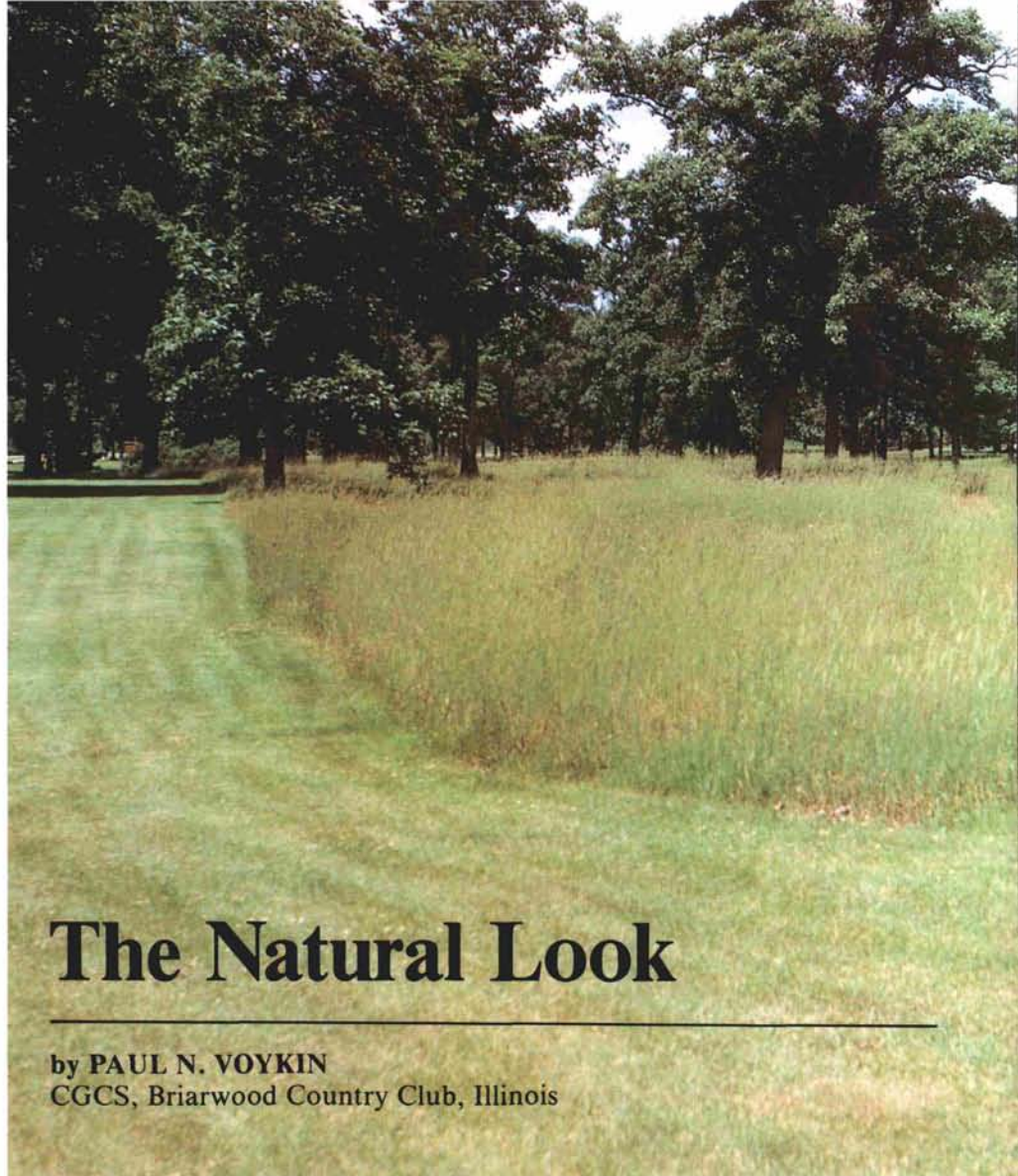
Probably the best natural, modern golf course that takes the spectator into consideration is The Glen Abbey, in Oakville, Ontario. Even here, where the natural berms have been used, not enough care was taken to prevent the surface runoff from ending up on the fairways. The Tournament Players Club, in Jacksonville, Florida, is also a fine golf course, but it does not have that natural look, i.e., having been there since time began. It is a labyrinth of drainage pipes from the so-called natural hazards. A true natural look uses the terrain as it was naturally created.

I would like to quote golf architect Robert Moote.

What do we actually mean by the natural look? If we mean only allowing the existing or important vegetation to return to its natural state, then I feel the degree of naturalization is dependent on the type of course, i.e., subdivision, country club, or tournament course. On the other hand, I first think of the natural look as having the topography dictate the green, tee, landing, and water areas. This has been done by architects since the game began, whether consciously or subconsciously. Therefore, I do not think the natural look is a fad. Even on plateau sites, water and trees dictate design. I admit, on occasion, sites have been leveled in subdivision development. Nevertheless, I think we are reverting to the old style of architecture.

I always make use of exciting topography. With contour mowing, we are strategically refining the variable-sized landing areas and with small target greens and shorter-length courses, we are placing more emphasis on finesse and accurate shot-making. This is important with the rising cost of construction and, even if the cost of maintenance is not a factor, *efficiency is*. One final point to ponder in the natural look; do we, the golf course architects, want to be stereotyped? I think not.

All of the problems — the maze of drainage pipes, the natural bunkers, the lack of surface drainage and the vast amount of hand work — fall on the shoulders of the golf course superintendent. If your club wants an unnatural natural look, then be prepared to pay for it in higher maintenance costs. On the other hand, the true natural golf course, built on a native links terrain, can be beautiful and, at the same time, quite economical to maintain.



## The Natural Look

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Figure 4.





**A**BOUT A DOZEN years ago I gave a talk in New York for the USGA Green Section entitled "Overgrooming is Overspending." Since then, I've enjoyed giving the same talk many times, both in the USA and in Canada. *Golf Digest* published the story, and some have said it was one of the early chronicles suggesting out-of-the-way areas on golf courses be permitted to grow wild. At first, many of my associates dismissed the thought; some probably placed it in the "crazy file."

All of this started 12 to 15 years ago. We were then in the era of The Great

*(Left) The rough is one area most superintendents overgroom. At Briarwood, we stopped mowing out-of-the-way areas a long time ago.*

*(Below) Birds and other wild animals feel safe in our natural areas.*



*We used to mow lake edges and the banks with rotaries almost into the water. Now we leave the banks to nature and the long grass also stops a few golf balls from jumping into the lake.*



Society! Gas was 40 cents a gallon. Parts for our machinery were relatively cheap and equipment cost 70 percent less than it does today. And so were supplies like fertilizers, chemicals, and other maintenance items. But all that has changed. OPEC arrived, ecological concern and demands have increased, and inflation now rules our lives. In 1982, unemployment and Chapter 11 bankruptcy filings grabbed the headlines. Overgrooming is no longer a speech made by a Chicago greenkeeper. It is now a national golf course concern.

Permit me to quote from an article that appeared in the November, 1982, issue of the *Bullsheet*, a publication of the Midwest Golf Course Superintendents Association. The author is Jack Snyder, President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and a former golf course superintendent himself:

Today we are suggesting the establishment of new mowing patterns and heights that reduce the acreage that must be cut frequently. This is in line with the time-tested philosophy of the Scots, who developed the game from its early beginnings to the game we recognize today. Golf will gradually move back to a more natural game, one that takes advantage of native materials and relies less on wall-to-wall turf.

Next is a statement from Arnold Palmer in a recent issue of *Golf Management*, the GCSAA magazine:

Even some of the famous courses have subtly reduced well-maintained fairway areas to 50, 30, and even 20 acres. Sure, we like the looks of lush, well-maintained courses. Who doesn't? But the choice may soon be to have less manicured courses or not have them at all! I think some form of the "Scottish look" is inevitable.

The procession of wall-to-wall grooming has peaked. Ecological concern, inflation, and high maintenance costs have dictated the end of the costly and excessive manicuring to all areas of the golf course. Energy and natural resources have become too precious to be used with abandon. The natural look is in whether you agree with it or not.

Let's ask ourselves — do we create? Are we artists who work with the natural world, or are we just indiscriminate caretakers who mow the grass from end to end with our expensive equipment, labor, and upkeep? The great international architect Mies Vander Roe once profoundly remarked, "Less is more." Think about it.