

# Chips 'N' Dips

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Figure 1.



Figure 3.



Figure 2.

**P**ERHAPS ONE of the most persistent and insidious problems encountered by golf course superintendents is the constant wear caused by golf carts, maintenance vehicles, and foot traffic. Many methods have been used to improve heavily worn areas, ranging from natural to artificial means, such as turf paving systems. While these artificial surfaces work to varying degrees, the golfer cannot play a shot directly off most of them. As an alternative to artificial cart paths, many clubs have used ropes or signs to restrict carts to paths, and various fanning techniques to distribute vehicular wear throughout a broader area when leaving and entering cart paths and green areas (Figure 1).

While the following idea may not work under every situation and climate, it has worked very well at El Caballero

Country Club, in Tarzana, California. Ray Lozano, the superintendent, has devised a means to use wood chips derived from limbs and trees on the golf course site to provide a natural means of controlling compaction on these heavily worn areas. The chips are comprised primarily of eucalyptus, pine, acacia, and other trees found throughout the golf course (Figure 2). The chips are basically stored for approximately one year before they are used. Approximately three inches of chips are placed on the desired area and covered by one-half to one inch of soil. The area is then seeded with the desired grass (bermuda in the summer and perennial ryegrass in the winter) and covered with a fine layer of steer manure. Depending on the growth of the seed, play is kept off the area from four to six weeks and then opened for regular wear patterns. In the past three years, certain areas have per-

formed exceptionally well on the exits and entries of cart paths under heavy play conditions.

The best response with this technique can be seen in the main exit and entry area next to the 16th green (Figure 3). No soil was used on this area, and the surrounding bermudagrass was allowed to encroach without overseeding. As can be seen, areas adjacent to this wood chip area suffer from severe compaction and turf loss. The wood chip area has lasted for over six years at this point with no turf loss and only a minor change in contour resulting from decomposition of the chips. It is felt that if you wish to try this idea on your golf course, it would be best to use as little soil as possible to reduce the possibility of compaction. The idea has also been used successfully when chips are covered by sod with little soil attached.