

# REDUCING TRAFFIC WEAR

by **PAUL H. VERMEULEN**

Agronomist, Western Region, USGA Green Section

**O**NE OF THE MOST common problems seen on golf courses across the entire country is turf-grass wear. This problem is especially evident in areas where golfers are funneled into narrow paths by obstacles, such as bunkers or steep slopes. A special case in point is where large bunkers are placed between a putting green and neighboring cart path, forcing golfers to walk around either end.

When asked to offer a solution, the first suggestion would probably be to remove, or possibly modify, the obstacle and allow sufficient room for players to pass. In a situation where the obstacle or bunker is a unique architectural ele-

ment, however, an alternative solution must be sought.

One alternative is to install a series of steps constructed from ordinary railroad ties. These steps absorb the impact of foot traffic, yet allow areas in between to support good-quality turf-grass. While it is true that these steps allow stray golfers a free drop under Rule 24, it is worth remembering that a worn path unjustly penalizes the same golfer, and the Green Committee will unlikely decide to mark such areas as "Ground Under Repair."

To be successful with this turf tip, great care must be taken during installation. The key point to consider is the

spacing between each step. In short, it must conform to the average pace of a golfer as he or she walks through the area. The average age of the membership and the slope of the terrain are factors to consider in spacing.

The width of the steps should also be considered. They should be wide enough for at least two players to walk comfortably side by side. This tip should also be applied to other areas of the course, such as walkways between tees and cart paths, or in shady areas where it is difficult to maintain quality turfgrass conditions. Remember, however, that in some situations, such as on a severe slope, it might be better to install formal steps or a complete path.

*Landscape tie "steps" can help reduce turf injury in highly trafficked walk-off areas.*

