

Turf Twisters

Q: I understand that tree evaluation programs are becoming quite popular on golf courses in the Northeast, and I am exploring the idea of starting a similar program for our golf course. Any advice that you could offer would be greatly appreciated. (Ontario)



A: Developing a comprehensive tree evaluation program is an excellent way to help prioritize tree care on your golf course. The best

way to start is by marking each tree using an inconspicuous, numbered metal tag that can be purchased from a forestry supply company. Marking trees during

the off-season helps save time during the evaluation phase, which is best conducted during the late summer, when play slows down, leaves are still on the trees, and extreme shade issues are apparent since the angle of the sun is lower in the horizon. Evaluations are most fruitful when conducted by your course superintendent, agronomist, arborist, golf professional, and green chairman/president. If trees are controversial, then it may be

best to also invite one or two members who can serve as a conduit of factual information to the membership. Each tree should be identified, measured for caliper at breast-height, and evaluated using several criteria, including safety, health, agronomics, playability, and aesthetics. Finally, assign an action step for each tree, including removal (priority 1, 2, 3 . . .), pruning (priority 1, 2, 3 . . .), relocation, or leave as is.

Q: Based on the results of fairway topdressing at other courses in the area, the green committee has asked me to develop a budget for this program at our course. Does the USGA have information

as to how much sand is needed on an annual basis to topdress 30 acres of fairway turf? (Illinois)

A: In your location, a good figure to use for the budget is 1,800 tons of sand. When applied in six applications at a rate of 10 tons per acre, this is enough sand to accumulate a layer approximately one-

half inch deep each year. Based on the results after your first year of topdressing, you can budget either more or less sand for subsequent years.

Q: Our superintendent and committee decided to suspend overseeding on our bermudagrass fairways and rough this fall. What can we do to make the dormant bermudagrass as playable as possible during the winter? (California)



A: Your maintenance practices in the fall will have a big impact on how the bermudagrass performs during the winter. Generally, it is recommended to core aerify the fairways and rough in September to give the turf plenty of time and good growing weather for recovery so it is as healthy as possible going into winter. Light and frequent applications of soluble fertilizers also will

sustain active growth until the weather turns cold and growth stops. Another good idea is to gradually raise the cutting height to $\frac{3}{4}$ " in late October or early November to provide extra padding for better traffic tolerance. Also, it is strongly suggested to reduce traffic on the dormant turf as much as possible. This includes maintenance vehicles as well as restricting golf carts to the paths.

