

Turf Twisters

Q: Every fall when we return to South Florida, the fairways and roughs at the course we play are always in great condition. By January, however, the fairways have become very thin, and tight lies are quite penal. Furthermore, the definition between the fairway and rough cuts disappears. Can't the superintendent put out more

fertilizer to keep the course in better condition through the winter season? (Florida)

A: Although wintertime temperatures in Central to South Florida are not cold enough to result in the base bermudagrass turf cover going completely dormant and turning brown, its growth rate slows drastically for two

to four months. Regardless of inputs, it is impossible to force continued growth and, in turn, produce any degree of recovery from golf cart wear and damage. Complaints about tight lies and no definition are common at facilities that host moderate to heavy winter-season play because the turf literally becomes beaten down. To

minimize this normal course deterioration, adherence to cart usage policies and other traffic control measures certainly helps. However, until environmental conditions in the spring are again favorable to sustain turf growth, a degree of patience and understanding must be exercised.



Q: Our head golf professional and superintendent must work together to mark our golf course properly. They disagree about

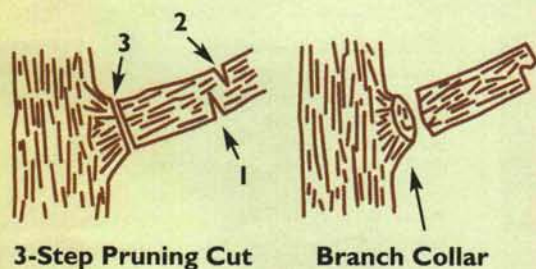
whether our water hazards should be defined with stakes or painted lines on the ground. Any suggestions would be appreciated. (Maryland)

A: They are both correct. Stakes and/or lines can be used to define the margins of water hazards. The benefit of a painted line is that it can

more accurately define the actual margin of the water hazard. Stakes provide better visibility for golfers at a distance. Once lines are initially established, they can be repainted periodically to maintain visibility. Because of their irregular shapes, it is nearly impossible to install enough stakes to completely define the margins of water

hazards. Stakes and lines together provide the best scenario for defining your water hazards. Where both stakes and lines are used, the stakes identify the hazard and the lines define the margin of the water hazard. Remember, both the stakes and the lines defining the margins of water hazards are considered to be in the hazards.

Q: We are about to begin our annual tree-pruning work, much of which we are able to complete in-house. What is the best pruning cut to promote healing of the wound? (New York)



A: The pruning cut should be made at the point where the branch collar joins the branch. Making the cut at this part of the branch collar leads to the most

rapid callous tissue formation and helps protect the tree from decay fungi. Be careful to use the "three-cut" method to reduce the weight of heavier branches and avoid bark tearing.