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# Turf Twisters

**Q:** On our course, the teeing grounds are cluttered with broken tees. Do these broken wooden and plastic tees cause damage to mowers when left on the surface? Some of our golfers say to just leave them on the ground and let the mowers take care of them. What is the most common practice? (Arizona)

**A:** Broken tees (both plastic and wood) can damage reel mowers and negatively impact mowing quality. To repair the damage, the mechanic must remove the cutting units, grind the reels and bedknives, and remount the cutting units — all of which takes a significant amount of time. Ideally,

golfers should pick up broken tees and put them in a trash container or small receptacle near the tee markers. This is a matter of proper golf etiquette. It is important for golfers to do their part to keep the course clean, and in the process, minimize damage to mowing equipment.



**Q:** Can you share some ideas on cutting costs to maintain rough? We are a public facility with a moderate budget. (Iowa)

**A:** Desperate times call for desperate measures, but there are several cost-saving ideas that should not impact playability or the desired level of course conditioning. Some of those ideas include:

1) limit the amount of nitrogen applied to rough that is largely shaded, as it needs only about half that required by areas in full sunlight; 2) thin trees to provide adequate sunlight and air movement for healthier turf that is less expensive to maintain; 3) reduce the costs of water and electricity by limiting the use of outer rows of triple-row irrigation systems

so that fairway edges and rough are irrigated only as is necessary, i.e., to avoid turf loss; 4) go without intermediate cuts or courtesy walks; 5) evaluate the grade of fertilizer and application program for the rough, as inexpensive options may fulfill basic turfgrass nutritional needs; 6) transition out-of-play areas to naturalized or minimal maintenance areas

that are infrequently mowed; and 7) review the herbicide application program (particularly pre-emergent) for weeds in the rough, as some may not be as problematic as they once were — especially in out-of-play areas, in between tree lines, or along course boundaries or property lines.

**Q:** Our course recently regrassed our greens to creeping bentgrass. The greens have performed superbly, but our collars have struggled, especially during the summer months. Why do our collars thin out, and are there any strategies that will help to prevent these problems? (Pennsylvania)



**A:** Creeping bentgrass collars continue to provide challenges, and the primary

reason is mechanical stress. Newer bentgrasses require aggressive mowing, rolling, light topdressing, etc. This leads to increased turning on collars, which causes the collar turf to thin and decline. These problems are most severe where turning area is limited because of steep slopes, or where a bunker or water feature limits equipment turning options. The use of plywood,

plastic sheets, and even plastic lattice has become popular for protecting collars during maintenance. This is labor intensive, but effective. Site-specific fertilization of collars also has provided improvement. Another option that has worked well is to aggressively overseed collars with perennial ryegrass because it is more resistant to traffic in these sometimes difficult-to-maintain areas.