

Common Sense Talking Points for Tree Clearing

-Colton Craig

1.) Shade

The shade a tree canopy casts will block out the sun and not allow the turf to receive the proper amount of sunlight. Also, shade delays the process of evaporation, making areas wetter longer and less playable. I feel bad for superintendents that are forced to sod areas right under trees year after year. Trees vs. Turf, it is a losing fight for turf every time.

2.) Root competition

Trees planted too close to a green complex can begin to grow under the green and compete with the green's root system for nutrients and water.

3.) Air Circulation

Let the greens breathe. Removing some trees in the direction of the prevailing winds will greatly help the health of your greens. Too often greens are suffocated by overgrown trees that are blocking all possible air movement. Compare it to being in a stuffy, stagnant room. The committee will understand. Many of them were alive before air-conditioning was in their childhood homes.

4.) Leaves

During the fall, many superintendents are given the impossible task of removing all of the leaves from the golf course. Leaves make it hard for the players to find their ball and negatively affect playability. Many man hours are used on leaves during this time of year. Calculate how much time and money is being used on leaves each fall and show your committee. The cost should raise a few eyebrows.

5.) Angles and Strategy

Many of today's projects are 'restorations' of historic courses. These courses are nearly 100 years old, and often we have the luxury of looking at old federal aerials of the golf course from the 1920s or 30s. The most obvious difference every time is canopy coverage. Golf is a game of angles and strategy, or at least it should be. The large amount of tree planting that took place at many of these courses has robbed the golfers of the different ways to play a hole. Instead, many courses have the appearance of tree lined bowling alleys with only one option to play the hole. Golf should be a game of thought and execution, not just execution.

6.) Distortion of Land Forms

A. W. Tillinghast simplifies it the best with his chicken-scratch sketches of how trees affect a player's perspective. For example, a green site that has a rather steep uphill climb with large trees in the foreground will make the climb to the green feel less severe. Think of it as driving a car. If you are driving on an undulating landscape that is tree lined, it is going to feel less rolling than the same landscape without trees.

7.) Display the Beautiful and Unusual

Before you get called out for just being a tree hater, remind the owner or committee that you want the beautiful and unusual trees to stand out more. Imagine if you were at a museum or art gallery and the walls were filled with 3rd grade paintings next to world-class master pieces. The eye needs time to rest, and tree clearing can help reveal some beautiful trees that golfers did not even know were on the course.

8.) Views and Vistas

Seeing an infinity green from an approach or looking over rolling terrain in the distance background can be some of the most significant/impactful parts of your golf course. Not every golfer can appreciate good strategy because they aren't good enough for strategy to matter, but every player can appreciate aesthetics of a golf course. Too frequently these great views get blocked by a large grouping of trees.

9.) US Open

Hard to blame them, but owners or greens committees are influenced by what they see on TV. Many industry professionals would argue that the Masters, over all, has had a negative impact on superintendents due to unrealistic expectations. However, we have the opportunity to use TV to our advantage with the most recent US Open venues. Including 2018, The past five US Open golf courses have not had a single tree come into play. Pinehurst No.2 is treelined on nearly every hole, but the corridors are so wide that not a single tree becomes an issue for the players.