

Turf Twisters

Q: We've had a problem with our greens for the last couple of years, and our superintendent has recommended cutting a lot of trees down to improve sunlight penetration as a solution. Does this make sense, and how much could it possibly help? The trees have been there for a long time, and we never had problems with the greens before! (New York)

A: If the greens are heavily shaded or receive poor air circulation, tree work could make an enormous difference! Tree growth over a period of a few years may not be very significant, but add it up over 10 or 20 or more years, and the growth and corresponding decrease in sunlight and air circulation can be calamitous. Many courses now are removing sizable numbers of trees that were planted 30-40 years ago

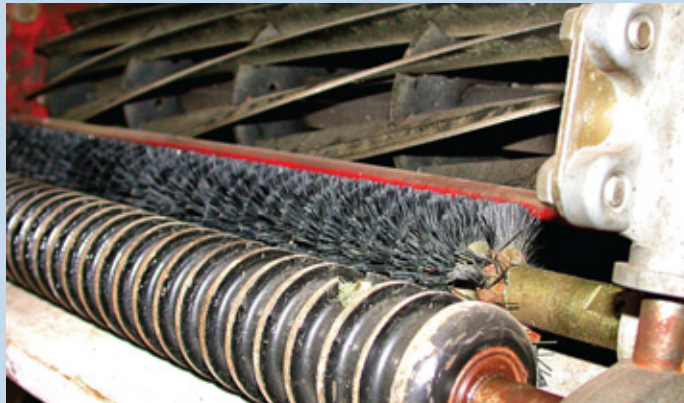


or more. Once the trees achieve sufficient size to shade and block air move-

ment, their detrimental effects can be huge, and removal is usually the solution.

Q: Some of my members have been reading about the use of brushes to assist in the preparation of the greens. Can this strategy be used, and is this a better technique than vertical mowing? (Maryland)

A: Brushing the turf prior to mowing is not a new technique; it has been around for a very long time. This practice has experienced renewed interest due to new equipment designs. There are tools that provide very



effective brushing just prior to mowing. Brushes can be fit to existing mowing equipment, allowing for the completion of two practices

at the same time. With any practice, the dose makes the poison. Too much brushing at the wrong time of year can be harmful.

Brushing and vertical mowing are two separate management techniques. Brushing is more of a surface preparation strategy, and vertical mowing is a technique used to thin the grass stand while also removing thatch in the upper portion of the soil profile. Vertical mowing is much more abrasive and, as such, should be used strategically and sparingly. Brushing (with the right brush), on the other hand, can be used more frequently.

Q: Should our private club close on Mondays to allow the grass to rest? (Alabama)

A: Historically, private clubs often closed on Monday because the low utilization of the club did not warrant keeping staff in the club-

house and golf shop. With that said, the turf management department has an entire day to work without worrying about disturbing

golfers. Ultimately, every golf course must determine what makes sense.

