

Betchworth Park Golf Club

Tree Management Policy (September 2021)

This document is an addendum to the Course / Environmental Policy (August 2021) and will be updated, as and when necessary, by the Greens Committee in conjunction with the Course Manager.

Key Criteria

Betchworth Park Golf Club is a parkland course in which the tree population has increased dramatically over the years. This presents significant challenges to maintain the integrity and well-being of the course itself.

The following criteria will be used with regard to the maintenance of trees at the Club, including planting, removal, reshaping and relocation:

Impact on playability of the course

Impact on the agronomics of all playing surfaces

Golfer / public safety

General tree health

Life expectancy

Impact on traffic flow

Impact on aesthetics and surrounding trees

Desirability of trees based on its species

Impact on Playability

We will be influenced by the fact that Betchworth Park Golf Club is a member's club which is managed to give the best possible enjoyable playing facilities. Trees that unfairly penalize one segment or another of our golfing population will be considered for pruning or removal.

Impact on the Agronomics of all Playing Surfaces

It is important to understand that trees compete effectively with greens, tees and fairways for moisture, nutrients, and sunlight. Some trees are worse offenders than others and some surfaces are better adapted than others to handle the shade and root competition. However, trees and grass surfaces are rarely compatible. Trees that impact severely on the task of maintaining healthy, wear-tolerant surfaces will not be tolerated. Reduced sunlight affects the growth habit of the turf and leaves it more susceptible to wear, causing a sparse surface with bare patches. It also encourages fusarium on greens. Under low light conditions, surfaces will also suffer from reduced vigour. Grass needs at least eight hours of direct sunlight to exhibit moderate recuperative power and turf that receives extra stress, wear and tear (i.e. greens and tees) will perform better with even more light. All things being equal, morning sun is more valuable (e.g. for drying the turf or dealing with frost) than afternoon sun. Trees that block sunlight will continue to be considered for removal.

The other major effect trees and brush can have is in reducing air circulation. Reduced air circulation translates to increased temperature and relative humidity, and this favours the growth and development of many turfgrass pathogens. In summary, a poor grass-growing environment creates less vigorous turf that is more susceptible to injury and infection. When the turf suffers injury, whether it is through wear, fungal infection, nematodes, or insect infestation, the damage is enhanced and the recovery is hampered by the lack of adequate sunlight.

Failure to provide turf with its most basic needs clearly increases labour requirements and the use of pesticides, which we seek to avoid. It also results in an increased use of machinery, fertilisers and soil improvers, which all translates into more expensive golf.

The impact on traffic flow will also be considered. The placement of any physical obstruction, such as a tree, in a high-traffic area results in concentrated and impossible-to-manage wear problems. When the obstruction is a tree, the problems with the turf are magnified because of the added stress of tree root competition and shade. We will avoid planting trees or other vegetation in high-traffic areas.

Golfer / Public Safety

We regard golfer / public safety as being one of the most serious considerations when evaluating trees. Tree failure cannot always be predicted, but trees with obvious structural problems will be removed, particularly when they are situated in high play / traffic areas or adjacent to public rights of way.

General Tree Health

If the form, structure, or species is poor or undesirable it may be considered for removal. The same will apply to trees that have naturally symmetrical growth habits but are somehow damaged and misshapen and those that have to be over-pruned for playability reasons. This is not to say that all imperfectly formed trees will be removed - it is the nature of some tree species to have an irregular growth habit.

Life Expectancy

Most tree species have predictable life expectancies and, whilst this is not an exact science, we will take a tree's potential life span into consideration when drawing up long term plans for the course. It does not make sense to spend money on corrective pruning, pest control, or fertilization for trees affected by a serious or incurable malady. Removal is usually the most fiscally prudent decision.

Impact on Traffic Flow

Golfers move around the course in a fairly predictable manner and this will be taken into account with regard to tree location. It is also necessary for plant and machinery to move around the course to undertake construction or maintenance work and this will be considered in order to avoid damage to playing surfaces.

Impact on Aesthetics and Surrounding Trees

Whilst trees compete with turf, they also compete with other trees. Trees planted too closely together will be sickly, stunted and deformed and they will never be able to achieve their full potential. It can be appropriate to have a high density of trees in some areas, perhaps to create definition or separation, but stand-alone specimens are also desirable and can have a dramatic visual impact. As necessary, we will remove less desirable trees and not allow self-seeded trees to grow without a reason. We will be mindful of any opportunity to expose some of the better specimens we have on the course so that golfers can enjoy and appreciate a magnificent tree that they might otherwise overlook. This kind of work will enhance the appearance of the course extend the life span of our most attractive and valuable trees.

Another point regarding aesthetics is the views from various parts of the course. At Betchworth we enjoy some stunning views which add to the overall golfing experience. This will be kept in mind during long term planning.

Desirability of Trees based on Species

Certain species of trees are inherently more valuable than others and many species are not well suited to use on golf courses. Fast growers, soft-wooded, or species with invasive roots will be avoided as will trees with dense canopies that cause excessive shade or create especially severe penalties to golfers. Existing trees that create litter (such as sweet chestnut) or have severe pest problems will be phased out over a period of time.

Current Situation

As already stated, Betchworth Park is a parkland course in which the tree population has increased dramatically over the years. Aerial photographs from 1953 clearly show how sparse the tree population was then. Instead, there were a number of specimen native trees.



Note that there were absolutely no trees below the ridge (left of 16th) and only one or two amongst a hedgerow acting as a border between the 17th and the right of way to Brockham.

The presence of so many trees on / adjoining the course presents significant challenges to maintain the integrity and well-being of the course itself. The Club has employed The Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) to provide scientific advice for a number of years now. They have commented that there are far too many trees on this golf course, not enough air and light or ground cover”.

Having said that, we recognise that the wider environment requires healthy trees and so a good balance is required moving forward.

To that end, specific plans for each hole will be developed in order to achieve our main goal of promoting healthier playing surfaces and better playability. We do not intend to make dramatic changes but will address issues on a hole-by-hole basis moving forward.

The following section, which will be updated as and when required, details some of the suggested works that are required in the coming year(s) to achieve our objectives. When / if the ‘works’ will be carried out will be dependent on the availability of manpower resources and finances.

Suggested Work

Hole 1

- Nothing planned at this time. Periodical pruning will be required to both sides of the hole to maintain healthy trees and air movement.

Hole 2

- The Oak behind the white tee is lopsided and may require trimming.
- The Oak and Sweet Chestnuts on the left of the hole are encroaching to the line of ball flight. May need to be trimmed back.



Hole 3

- Nothing planned at this time.

Hole 4

- Oaks behind the 4th green may require removal of dead limbs, tidying to preserve their long-term well-being.

Hole 5

- Clearance of scrub on right adjacent to hedgerow / farmer's land. Currently thick with brambles, hawthorn and himalayan balsam.
- Left oak behind green is suspected to be diseased and may require removal of dead limbs, tidying to preserve its long-term well-being



Hole 6

- Nothing planned at this time.

Hole 7

- Remove 2 of 4 Sycamore trees (those adjacent to / overhanging fairway). Current situation is that balls ending up on left of a narrow fairway have no direct shot to the green and the fairway grass below these trees is suffering. Extend fairway cut to left.



Hole 8

- Nothing planned at this time.

Hole 9

- The RH side tree line has become very dense with many low hanging branches and scrub. Pruning / clearance of some scrub will be required.

Hole 10

- Nothing planned at this time.

Hole 11

- Trim back overhanging branches of Limes to left of white / yellow tees.
- Remove dead wood / trim Oak tree to right of tee to maintain health.
- Remove 2 x Ash trees to right of fairway / rough that are showing signs of 'Ash die back'.
- Remove 2 of 7 Scots Pines at bottom of slope to right of fairway. Current landing area on sloping fairway is very small. Opportunity to extend fairway to right where rough is particularly lush / penal and fairway landing area is extremely small.



Limes to left of 11th tee



2 x Ash with 'die back'



2 of 7 Scots Pines

Hole 12

- Trim overhanging branches from tee to end of carry on right
- Reduce / trim Oak trees behind 12th green (NB: trees may be on adjoining land but low overhanging branches may be removed).



Hole 13

- Reduce / trim / remove dead wood from Oak behind green.



Hole 14

- Remove 2 x Chestnut trees adjacent to fairway which are encroaching on fairway and line of sight to fairway from tee. Result is that golfers are being pushed right to deep rough. Will help adjacent Oaks.



- Trim back large overhanging Yew. It's a "mess"!
- Potentially, plant some new Yews to left along fence line to act as a future barrier to public footpath.
- Plant more Rowans between 14th & 15th to left of existing trees (very good visually & for birds)

Hole 15

- Remove dead wood / trim Oak tree to left of white tee to maintain health.
- Remove dead wood / trim Oak tree to left of red tee to maintain health of tree and tee below whilst improving line of sight to green. Currently unable to use left side of Ladies tee.



- Plant some sweet chestnuts (left of 14 / back of 15).
- Top dead tree at back of green. Will cause serious damage to green if falls.

Hole 16

- Plant some Oak saplings behind deceased Oak to right of fairway. Clear 3m circle around existing root and mulch. Extend mulch back in line with Oak from tee to new Oak saplings.
- Remove 2 x scrub oaks at end of line of trees below ridge on corner.
- Reduce / trim / remove dead wood from Oak to left of green.
- Reduce / trim / remove dead wood from Oak to back of green.

Hole 17

- Reduce / trim / remove dead wood from Oaks to left of tee
- Remove Ash trees to left of fairway / rough that are showing signs of 'Ash die back'

Hole 18

- Trim back overhanging trees to right of 18th. Continuation of works completed by tees.
- Reduce / trim / remove dead wood from Oak to left of fairway (opposite bell).

Driveway / Triangle

Number of Ash trees showing distress / die back. Recommends removal as public right of way. Advised that they are on Mole Valley Council land but that Council do not consider their removal is required at this time.

