

2021-2022 Forest Management Plan

The tree management program at Essex Golf and Country Club consists of five major principles established through consultations and site visits conducted by the USGA Green Section Turf Advisory service from 1995-2016. The management program also relies heavily on sound agronomic practice developed through extensive research conducted by University turf management programs.

Also, the Long Range Restoration Plan completed by Renaissance Golf Design and commissioned by Essex Golf and Country Club, set out the direction to return the original character of Donald Ross's design. One of the findings from the assessment was that the golf course forest had impeded the original golf course design intent. The following principles were developed to manage the forest and enhance the golf course.

Principle #1

Ensure a balance between turf health, playability and a healthy forest.

As the golf course forest grows, turf health can be compromised through root encroachment, excessive shade and debris. These conditions result in turf decline, equipment damage and reduced playability. Remedial measures such as root pruning, canopy thinning or removals are recommended where needed to ensure that turf health is the priority.

Note: Studies have shown that bentgrass requires a minimum of 8hrs. of full sun to be vigorous and healthy. Also, debris is defined as acorns, maple keys, oak beards and deadwood.

Renaissance Plant excerpt:

The original character of the golf course landscape has changed from what Mr. Ross had started in 1929. Essex is a beautifully treed golf course. There are a number of perfectly placed specimen trees that enhance the play and beauty of the golf game. During the past several decades, Essex has engaged in several tree-planting programs. As the trees have matured many are now encroaching on the original specimen trees and inhibiting the golf design. Bunkers and greens surrounded by trees have become a maintenance problem. Non-indigenous species of ornamental trees and shrubs clutter the open spaces meant for golf views and play. Turfgrass suffered due to a lack of sunlight and air circulation. Selective clearing and pruning, in many cases, will be necessary to open up the golf design. Clearing around specimen trees to allow them to flourish will preserve and enhance a more natural look to the golf course. It is understandable for the need of planting of trees for safety considerations, but a well thought out tree planting program that takes the golf design into consideration first will be the most successful of all. The goal is to have a healthy forest with the proper specimen golf trees enhancing the game. In golf, trees enhance the game, not impede it.

Principle #2

Ensure the health and safety of the forest is regularly evaluated. (Yearly)

Conditions such as disease, invasive species, structural integrity and trees posing a threat to the protection of players are routinely monitored. With the ever-changing forest environment, the grounds committee supports yearly evaluations to be current with the state of the forest. When these conditions arise, the golf course superintendent, in consultation with Essex Golf and Country Clubs arborist will make recommendations to the Grounds Committee and Board of Directors to mitigate possible risks to persons, property and health of the forest.

Principle #3

Ensure the future health of the forest by planting indigenous species in the proper healthy location.

In the past, many areas of the golf course were planted with non-indigenous trees species such as invasive Norway maples, which obscure many of the brilliant specimen Oak, Hickory, Tulip, Sassafras and Beech trees throughout Essex Golf and Country Clubs property. Future tree plantings should focus on specimen trees indigenous in this region. Trees should only be planted in areas where they can mature over fifty years unencumbered by competing plantings.

Over the past ten years planting practices have changed due to multiple factors. Specifically, the method of underplanting within a fully mature stand of trees is no longer a recommended practice. These plantings cannot adequately compete for sunlight, nutrition and fully mature to their desired morphology. Only suitably open areas that will promote proper growing conditions should be considered.

Principle #4

Ensure that the original Architectural features, playing avenues, shot variety and interest are not impended by the maturing forest, enhancing the golf course.

As time passes and the forest grows, the variety of golf shot-making sometimes becomes limited by tree limbs or even double hazards (i.e. a tree limb or overgrown tree between a bunker and the shot path to the green). These situations make the shot process one dimensional, eliminating the original playing corridor to the eventual target. As the forest matures, a player's options and shot variety should follow the original architectural routing intended for the hole.

Principle #5

The Planting of proper tree species should occur in the appropriate location to ensure healthy growth for the next 50 years.

Trees must be planted in areas that allow them to flourish. Trees are only planted in open areas once old, existing trees are removed.

Overall, these five tree management principles allow members to enjoy the variety of shot-making, the interest of the golf course routing and the ability to execute shots to each and everyone's skill level. The goal is to have the golf course forest enhance the natural beauty of the golf course.

The Pride of Essex Tree Donation Program

The Pride of Essex Tree Donation Program is an essential part of the overall forest management plan here at the club. Members make tree donations on behalf of loved ones and past members, which will be placed in areas throughout the course. We have been fortunate to have had six trees donated by members in 2020.

TREE REMOVALS AND PLANTINGS

1. Trees to be removed, including the principle



- a) Dead Oak #10 - on fence line in accordance with Principle 2.



- b) #11 removal – Hepner recommendation and approved in accordance with Principle 4.



c) Prune Trees #12 – in accordance with Principle 4.



d) Maple #12 – removal in accordance with Principle 2.



e) Maple #13 – severely damaged, in accordance with Principle 2.



f) Crown die back #14 – removal in accordance with Principle 2.



g) #14 – Safety concern and decay, in accordance with Principle 2.



h) Oak #14 – Hepner recommended removal and approved, in accordance with Principle 4.

Tree Plantings

- 1 Red maple will be planted to the right of seven green.
- 6 trees will be planted on the right side of hole #11. Three Tulip trees and Three Maples.
- 3 Trees will be planted on the left side of Hole #12. One Kentucky Coffee tree one hardwood cherry and one Oak.