

# GROUNDS NEWSLETTER

## March 2024

Spring is almost here and our staff is excited to begin a new season. As always, our goal is continuous improvement of the golf course. We look forward to getting a little better everyday in 2024. Roughly 88% of our “core staff” will be returning so we will be able to hit the ground running when the time comes.

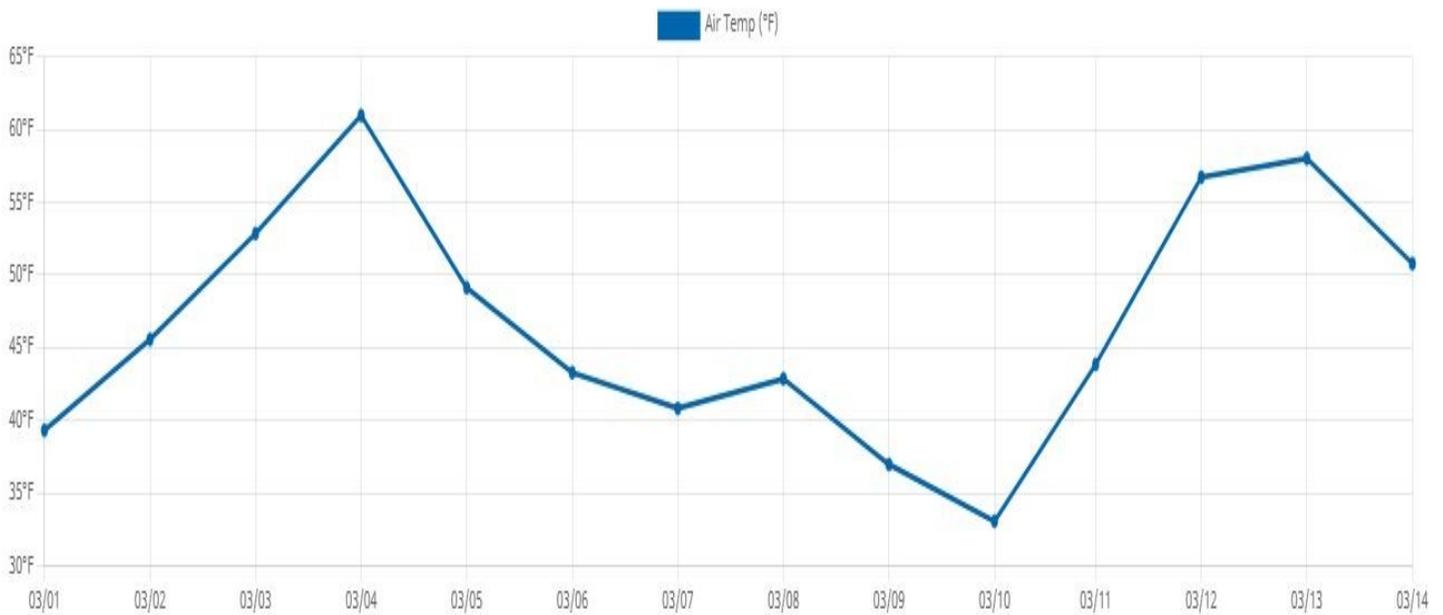
According to the National Weather Service we set a record or near record for warmest average temperature and were 22” below normal snowfall (Dec—Feb).

Winter 2023-2024 Dec-Jan-Feb		1st or 2nd Warmest Winter on Record* (*Preliminary, 125+ Years of Record) Near Average Precip Amounts (Rain + Snow Water) Somewhat Wetter in Southern MI, Drier in Central MI Top 3 Winter since 1950 for Fewest Days with 1+ Inch Snow Cover			
		Grand Rapids	Lansing	Muskegon	Kalamazoo
Average Temperature Fahrenheit		33.6° <b>+6.3°</b> Warmer than normal	33.3° <b>+6.9°</b> Warmer than normal	36.2° <b>+7.5°</b> Warmer than normal	35.3° <b>+7.9°</b> Warmer than normal
Precipitation Inches		7.25” <b>+0.13”</b> Above normal	6.56” <b>+0.89”</b> Above normal	5.62” <b>-1.33”</b> Below normal	6.83” <b>+2.11”</b> Above normal
Snowfall Inches		38.4” <b>-22.2”</b> Below normal	22.5” <b>-16.0”</b> Below normal	36.5” <b>-34.9”</b> Below normal	20.4”

National Weather Service 

It is worth noting, while temperatures were warmer than normal, the average was still 33.6 degrees. The grass stopped growing and went into dormancy.

The past couple of weeks have provided a few nice days that I will highlight on the next page. We were happy to open the golf course for 2 days the 1st weekend in March. The other nice days, this week, were used to aerify the East/West greens 2-3 weeks ahead of schedule. Because we have to shutdown the golf course during aerification, we wanted to complete this process early to minimize disruption to play later.



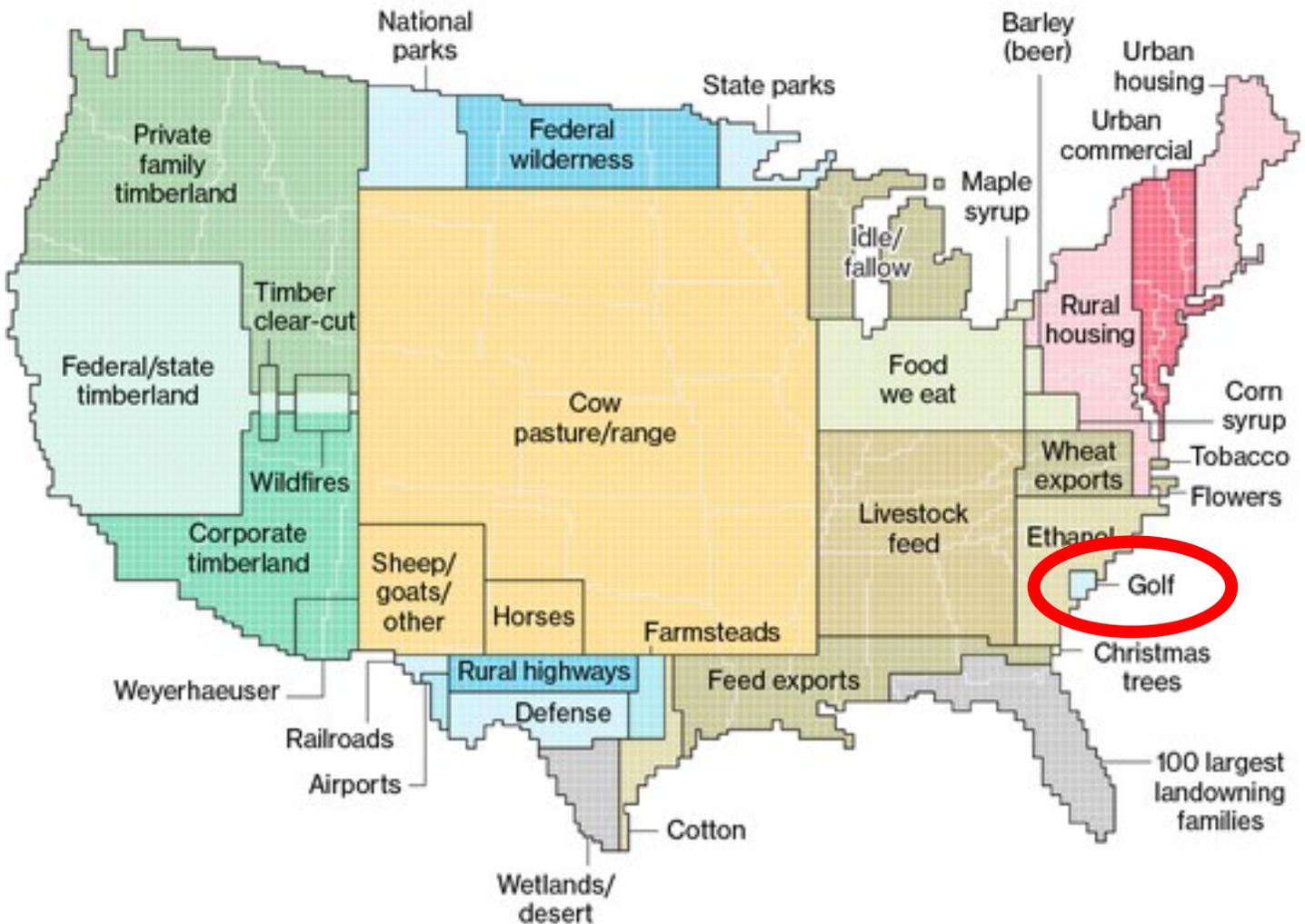
The graph shows the average daily temperature in March. Overall, the weather has not been great with the exception of the weekend we opened and the days we aerified. Unfortunately, moving forward, the extended forecast shows highs in the 40's and nights below freezing. Once the weather turns favorable we will be ready to open with no delay for golf course maintenance or clean up.

Sat 16	<b>53°/32°</b>	Mostly Cloudy	6%	WSW 19 mph
Sun 17	<b>38°/26°</b>	Cloudy	5%	WNW 17 mph
Mon 18	<b>35°/28°</b>	Cloudy	13%	NW 17 mph
Tue 19	<b>45°/24°</b>	Cloudy	6%	WSW 17 mph
Wed 20	<b>40°/28°</b>	Partly Cloudy	3%	NW 12 mph
Thu 21	<b>48°/30°</b>	Mostly Cloudy	21%	ESE 10 mph
Fri 22	<b>44°/27°</b>	AM Snow Showers	38%	ENE 13 mph
Sat 23	<b>40°/28°</b>	Rain/Snow Showers	35%	NE 14 mph
Sun 24	<b>43°/30°</b>	Mostly Cloudy	24%	ENE 15 mph
Mon 25	<b>48°/36°</b>	Rain/Snow	40%	E 15 mph

I am often asked what we do in the winter. Winter is slower paced than the summer but we have plenty of work to complete.

The Club has roughly 130 pieces of equipment ranging in price and function. Out of the 130 items there are multiples of the same machine. For example, we have 4 fairway mowers, 12 backpack blowers, 2 walking approach mowers, etc.

Golf course management is a fairly small and specialized industry when compared to other land use in the United States.



Equipment ranges in price from about \$90,000 for a rough mower to about \$320 for a commercial grade string trimmer. Good golf course mechanics are difficult to find because of the nuances associated with this specialized equipment. We are fortunate to have a mechanic that was a former golf course superintendent to understand the nuances of these machines and cutting units.

Every winter we service all 130 pieces of equipment. Obviously, the type of service required will differ depending on the type of machine but examples of this work include:

- Change Motor Oil and Filter
- Change Hydraulic Oil and Filter
- Check/Replace Hydraulic Hoses
- Replace Fuel Filter
- Check Radiator/Coolant
- Clean/Replace Air Filter
- Grease Fittings
- Check/Replace Bearings
- Check/Replace Bushings
- Sharpen/Grind Blades and Reels
- Check/Replace/Adjust Brakes and Fluid
- Check Tie Rods/Axle and Axle Oil
- Check/Replace Tires
- Check/Replace Belts
- Rust Proof and Paint
- Check/Clean Battery
- Check Electrical Components
- Replace Spark Plugs

This list is not 100% comprehensive but gives an idea. Winter service typically starts at the end of December and completed around the middle of March, roughly 90 days. Our mechanic and crew work diligently to complete everything by the start of the next season.

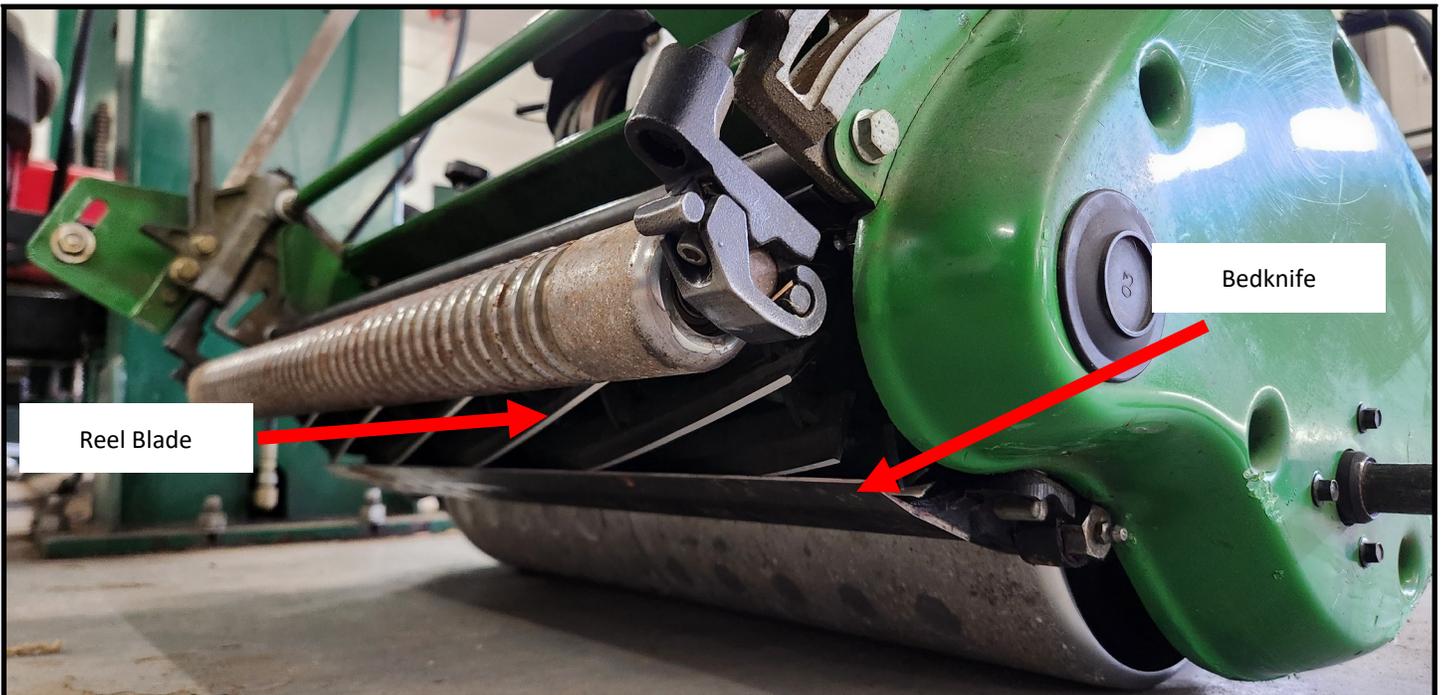


This machine is used to mow approaches and collars. The brush on the front is lowered to the ground while mowing. It reduces grain, provides an even cut of different grass types and produces an upright leaf blade.

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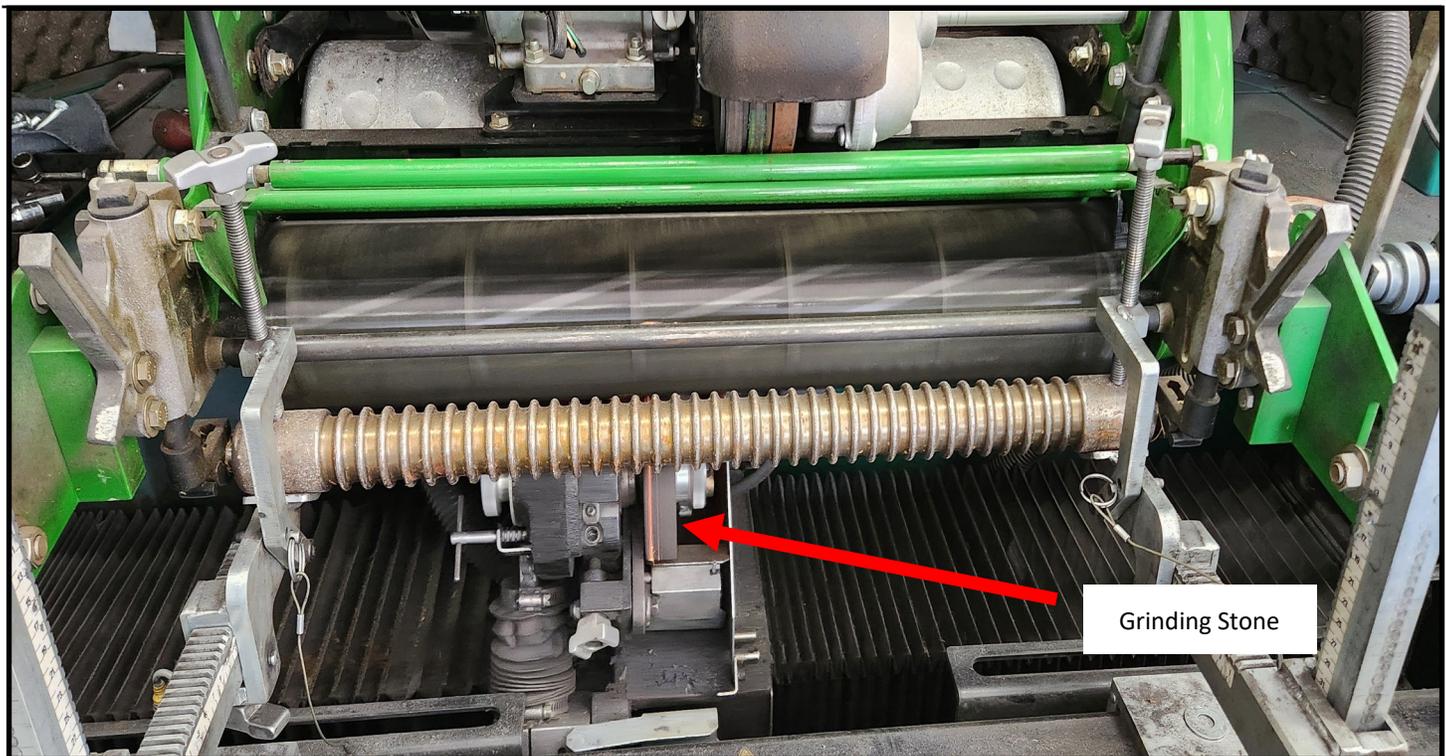
Reel mowers are used to mow our greens, tees, and fairways. Reels can cut at a lower height than a rotary mower. A rotary mower is typically what one thinks of when picturing a lawn mower. They are often used on home lawns and have a blade that spins horizontally.



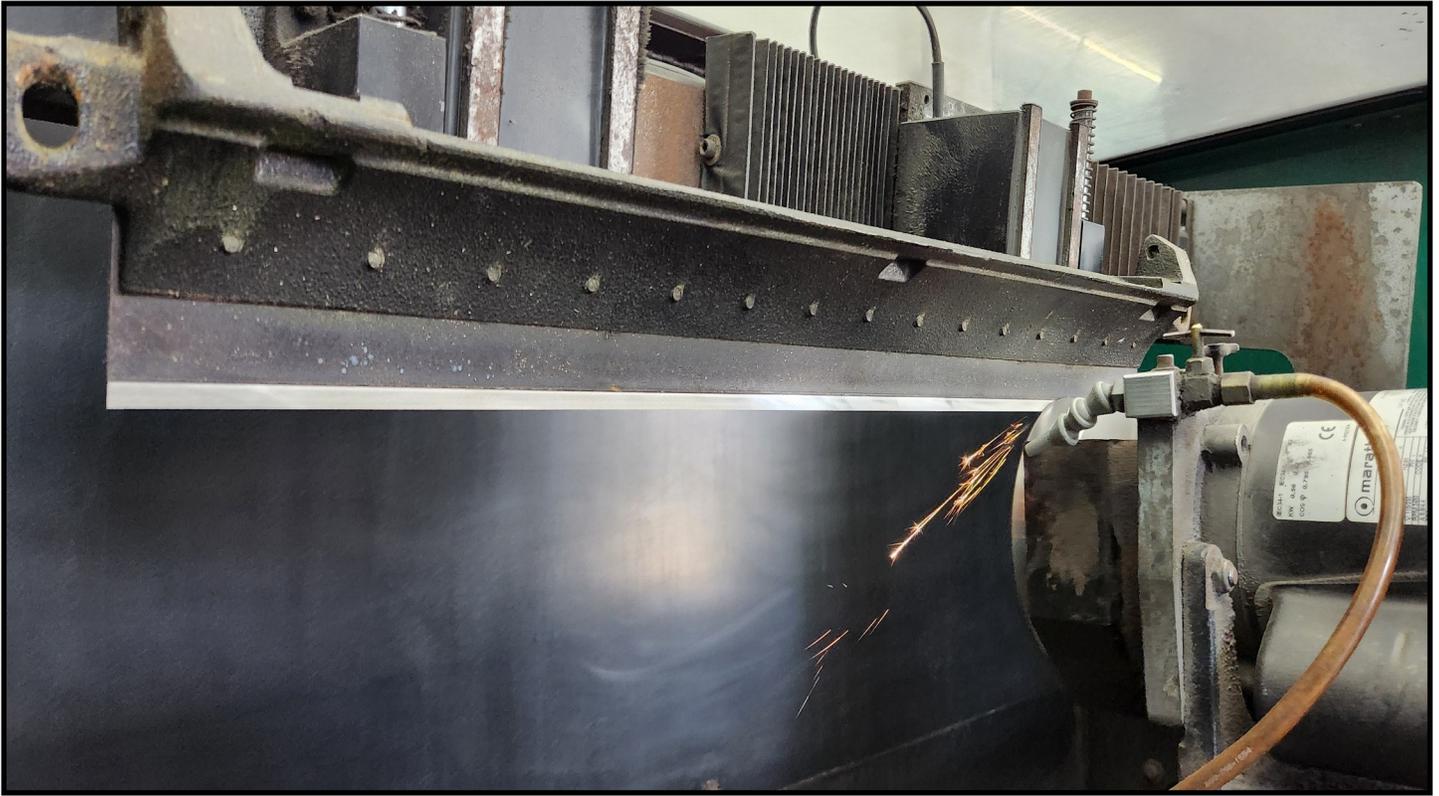
Reel mowers spin vertically and work more like a pair of scissors. They consist of a reel with multiple blades and a bedknife. The reel spins and the bedknife is stationary. The grass blade is cut between the reel and the bedknife.



Every reel and bedknife is sharpened using these grinding machines. It takes about 2—3 hours to set up and grind each reel unit with bedknife.



The photo above is a reel being sharpened. Proper set up is crucial. The reel needs to be square to the grinding stone with a tolerance of  $\frac{1}{1000}$  of an inch. The grinding stone moves side to side as the reel spins to sharpen each blade.



A photo of a bedknife being sharpened. The set up of a bedknife is equally important as the reel. Greens are mown at a height of roughly 0.100". The slightest imperfection makes a big difference.

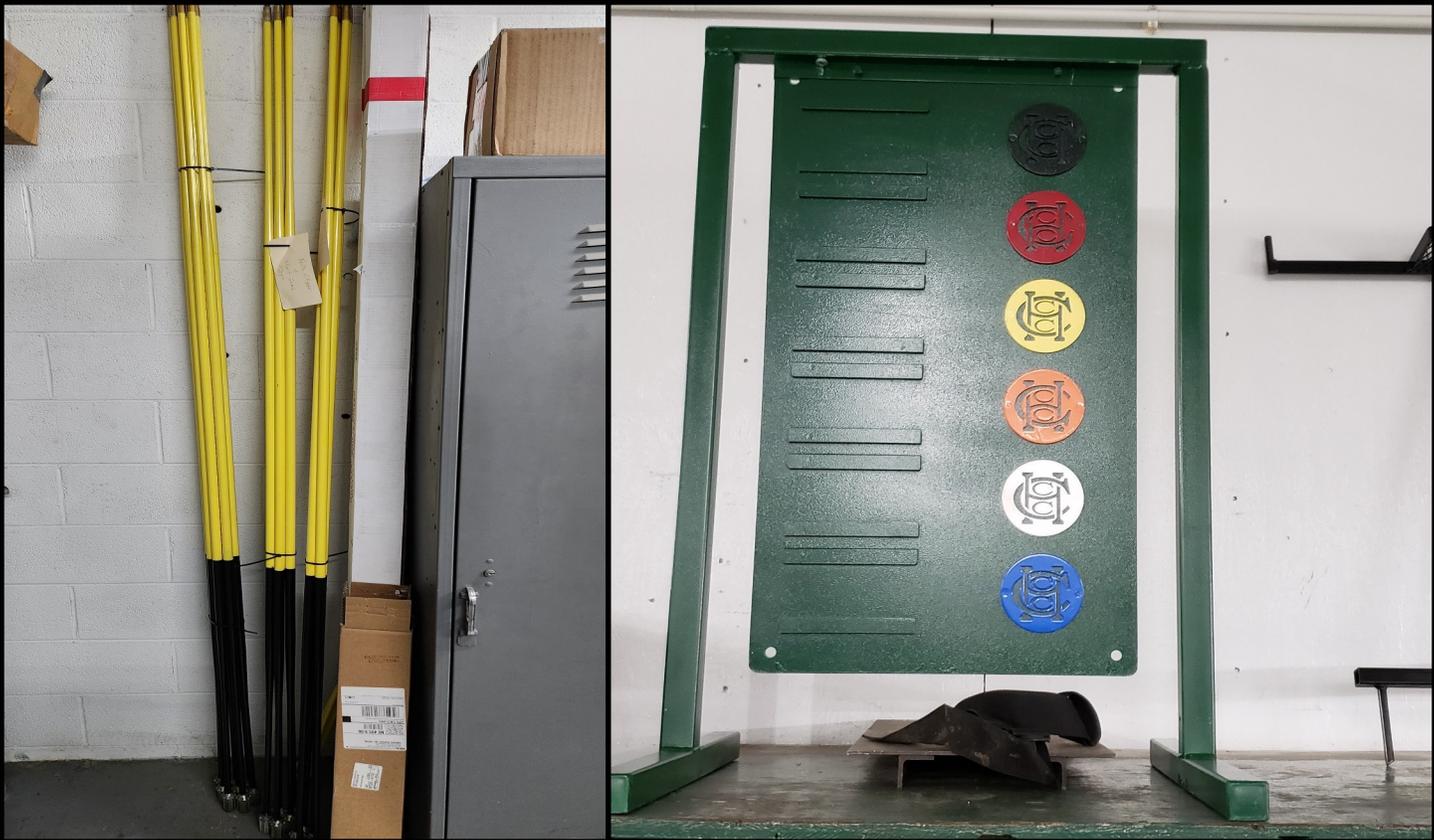


Fairway reels prepared for the grinder. There are 5 reels on each fairway mower, 3 reels on riding green and tee mowers and 1 reel on a walk mower. In total we have 59 reels for the machines used on greens, tees, and fairways.

In addition to equipment we refurbish our accessories. Accessories include tee markers, trash cans, flagsticks, cups, bunker rakes, driving range racks, driving range signs, etc.



Tee markers are sanded and painted. We have 288 tee markers. 2 full sets of each color. Tee markers are replaced with a fresh set half way through the season or as the paint scuffs/chips.



Even though we were under our average snowfall for the year what we did receive came down heavy and in bunches.



We use a tractor with a plow and back blade in addition to a plow truck as our primary snow removal equipment in the lot. It takes on average 3 to 4 man hours to clear the lot entirely but much depends on the quantity and weight of the snow.



A heavy snowfall can take about 8 man hours to clear all of the walks and fire exits. In addition to the walks we shovel all curb edges near the clubhouse.

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The winter provides a great time for planning and evaluating processes to improve conditions or efficiency. We update and create documents for training, golf course conditions, safety procedures, etc. Our mechanic, assistant superintendents, and I attend conferences for continued education.

Floyd, the golf course dog and goose chaser, continues to keep busy as well. Last year was his first full season at The Club. We will never be able to keep the geese off the golf course 100% but, overall, I thought the mess was decreased. Nesting in the spring and during the molting season, when geese cannot fly, will always be difficult times for control.

There are 2 main reasons border collies are used for goose control.

1. They are not a hunting dog so they do not have the instinct to actually harm the bird.
2. They naturally walk with their head low and have a posture resembling a wolf.



It has been difficult to get a good photo of Floyd chasing. The bird and Floyd move a lot faster than I. This is the best I could do so far.

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Please feel free to contact me anytime with questions or concerns.

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