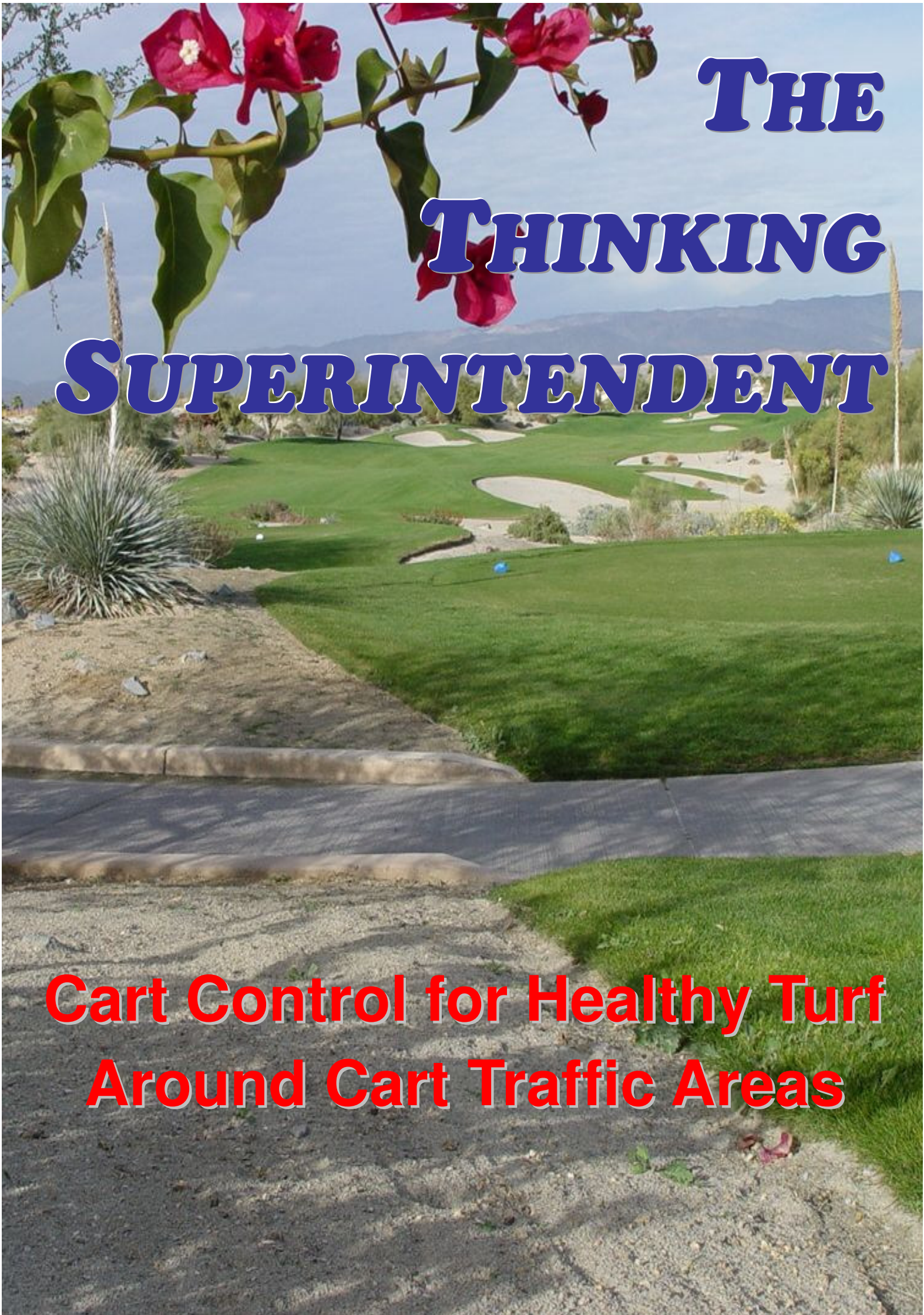
The Thinking Superintendent
Cart Control for Healthy Turf
Around Cart Traffic Areas

Thinking Superintendent

Controlling Golf Cart Traffic

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Since the advent of the powered golf cart, golf course managers have been challenged with yet another opportunity to provide acceptable golfing conditions under an adverse condition. Namely, how to maintain fine golfing turf around greens and tees while under the onslaught of the powered golf cart.

As modern golf course managers, the superintendents of today are well aware of the economic necessity of the golf cart. The golf cart is accepted as a part of the game which we must positively adjust to. This is true of our colleagues on the private club side of the industry as well as those colleagues on the public and resort side. However, it is probably the public-resort golf course where we will find the dilemma of cart versus turf most likely to occur, particularly around greens and tees. It is also in this sector of golf where we will find many of the possible solutions to this puzzle.

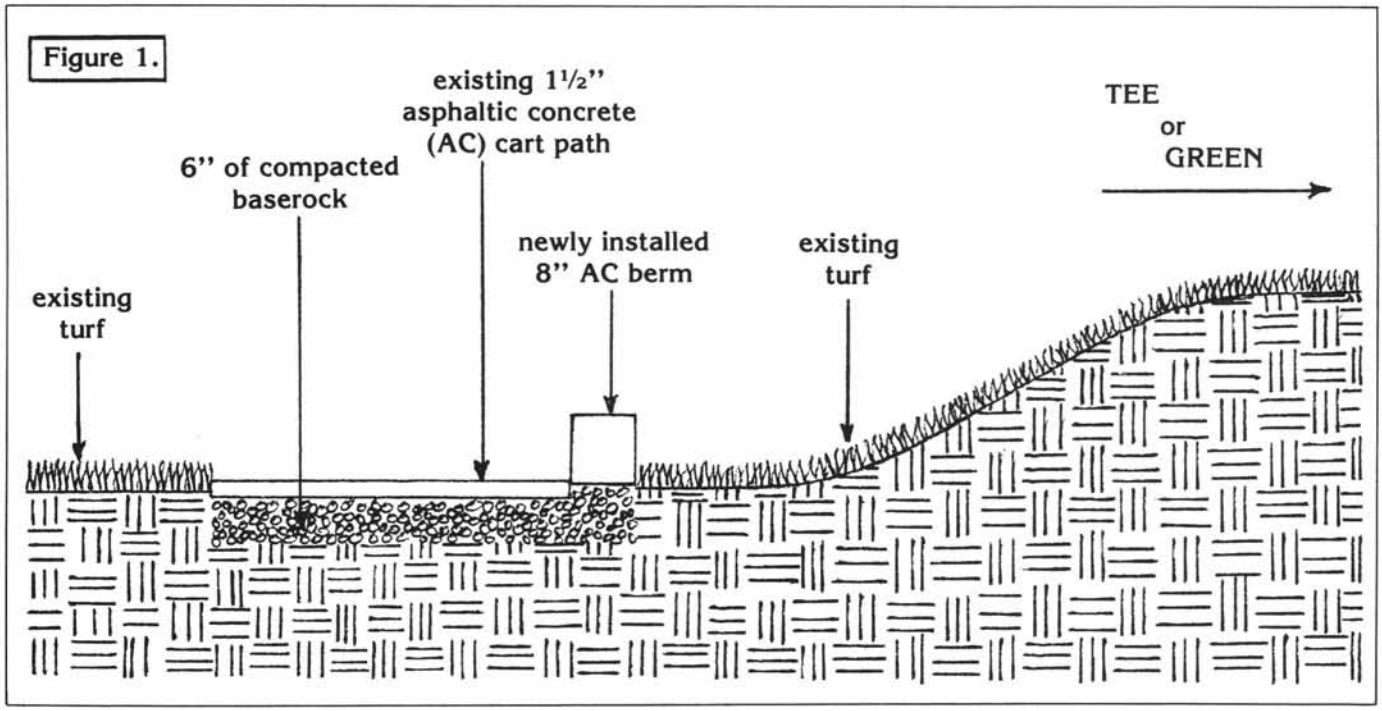
We have all seen the many ingenious methods used as attempts to control golf cart traffic. These include ropes, chains, logs, rocks, threatening signs and the over-worked marshals many courses use in cart control. Most of these methods have three common factors: they are handicaps to efficient maintenance, they destroy the natural beauty of the golf course and they are truly obstacles to the golfer.

The problem of carts and their wear on turf is not quite as simple as the singular problem of keeping carts on paths. The problem of the impact of golf carts upon turf is really two-fold. In addition to golf carts, the superintendent must also be aware of the concentration of foot traffic moving to and from a cart parking area around greens and tees. With the limited space around greens and tees it is frequently not possible to eliminate traffic patterns totally.

Therefore the solution to this cart versus turf dilemma must provide the objectives of both keeping carts on the path and providing healthy golf turf while under heavy foot traffic.

So, how can we accomplish this short of the use of helicopters or locating cart paths enormous distances from greens and tees. I would suggest consideration be given to the use of concrete or asphaltic concrete (AC) berms and proper drainage of

Figure 1.



the high-traffic, turf areas. The proper design and installation of an eight-inch berm will eliminate special maintenance, enhance the natural beauty of the golf course and serve as an obstacle to golf carts, not golfers.

I've found that AC berms lend themselves most readily to "in-house" installation. Concrete requires much more preparation and will generally cost twice as much per linear foot as does AC. A capable golf course maintenance staff can quickly learn the techniques of operating an AC berm machine. These machines can usually be rented, borrowed or even purchased at a very reasonable rate. Certainly this can be accomplished in-house much less expensively than contracting for the installation. Of course, a good way for a golf course staff to learn the techniques of berm installation is by having an outside contractor install the first berm. The golf course staff can then garnish some surreptitious, on-the-job training by careful observation of the contractor's crew. Your local quarry can probably give you leads on where to obtain a berming machine as well as helpful information on how to handle AC that is at a temperature of 400° F.

Once again, two important cautions: plan the layout carefully and provide abundant drainage in foot traffic areas.

In most cases the berms should be installed on the green side and on the tee side of cart paths. It isn't always necessary to run the berms the entire length of the paths in these areas. It is advisable to make a careful analysis of just how the traffic areas are wearing by making notes and diagrams noting the natural flow of traffic. A basic axiom to remember is: "Golfers are like water or electricity, they'll seek the path of least resistance." They'll cut corners with their carts on turns and when parking they'll "squeeze" six inches closer to the green or tee and off the cart path. Proper berming can prevent both.

On occasion, this author has observed the beautiful installation of a berm on a golf course, which is missing one final element (Figure 1.). That missing final touch is the backfilling between the berm and green or tee area. This type of berm is only a half-finished job, does not provide for ease of maintenance nor adequate drainage, and flirts with the probability of an unplayable lie for the golfer.

To eliminate the above problem, it is necessary to provide drainage and fill the traffic areas to the top of the berm with a light, uniform, sandy soil (Figure 2.). Remember you're fighting a basic compaction problem which can best be combated with a well-drained, porous soil.

Follow these basic rules and controlling traffic around greens and tees should be a breeze:

- Design a well thought-out, natural layout being aware that the ghosts of Alister MacKenzie and Donald Ross are looking over your shoulder.
- In most cases berms should be installed on the green and tee sides of cart paths.
- Provide plenty of drainage in foot traffic areas on the green and tee side of the berm. Sod or seed.
- Backfill to the top of the berm on the grass side of the whole length of the berm.
- It's not always necessary to berm the entire cart path around greens and tees.
- Berm on the inside of turns to prevent "corner cutting" by golfers.
- Berm at approaches to greens and tees in order to "capture" golf carts onto cart paths.
- Provide berms at all possible parking areas in order to keep the carts on the path.
- Always design berms so as to accommodate mowers and maintenance equipment. ■

Figure 2.