



Golf courses aren't the only ones who benefit from closely mown surfaces. Tightly trimmed grass courts provide an ideal surface for tennis.

UNDERSTANDING MOWING HEIGHTS

BY USGA GREEN SECTION

Unique mowing heights are a defining characteristic that help distinguish the different playing surfaces throughout a golf course. Typically, there are at least three different cutting heights, the lowest of which is used on putting greens. It is truly remarkable to think that plants cut at 1/8 of an inch – slightly less than the thickness of two quarters stacked on top of each other – can withstand hundreds of thousands of golfer footsteps and survive periods of extreme heat and bitter cold temperatures in a given season.

Achieving such a low cutting height requires specialized reel mowers that differ from the common rotary mowers used to maintain home lawns. The combination of precise mowing equipment and agronomic expertise allow golf course superintendents to push turfgrass to incredible levels. A typical home lawn is mowed from just under 2 inches to over 3 inches depending on the turfgrass species and climate. That means the grass in your home lawn could easily be 25 times higher than the grass on a putting green.

When it comes to mowing turf low, it doesn't get much lower than a putting green. However, other examples of turfgrass surfaces that are maintained at similar or slightly higher heights include tennis courts, bowling

greens, bocce courts, cricket pitches and croquet courts. Professional baseball infields and football and soccer fields generally are maintained at a little higher height of 3/8 inch to 5/8 inch, similar to a typical golf course fairway.

Mowing low certainly provides playability benefits for a range of sports, but low mowing heights must be balanced with environmental stresses. As a general rule, it is more difficult and costly to maintain turf at lower heights. So, leave it to the pros when trying to mow low.