



*Managing intermediate rough is never easy, regardless the season. Now is a good time to ask if it is necessary or a waste of time and resources.*

## A ROUGH FEATURE

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A lot has been said this year about all the challenges superintendents faced with frequent rains. Two areas that commonly declined this year were intermediate rough and collars. Intermediate rough often is one of the first areas to experience decline, and this year was no exception.

As you are busy seeding or sodding intermediate rough and collars this fall, it may be worth discussing whether these areas are necessary. Eliminating collars and intermediate roughs is a growing trend because of the additional maintenance required in these areas to deliver frequently marginal results. Eliminating one or both features reduces maintenance requirements and can improve definition between surfaces.

Intermediate rough is a product of championship golf and was introduced at a time when it was common to see rough grown in excess of 6 inches tall to increase difficulty for professional golfers. Not only has the model of 6-inch-tall rough faded away, it was never a reality for daily golf course setups. Most courses in the Northeast maintain primary rough between 2.25 and 2.50 inches. An intermediate rough at about 1.50

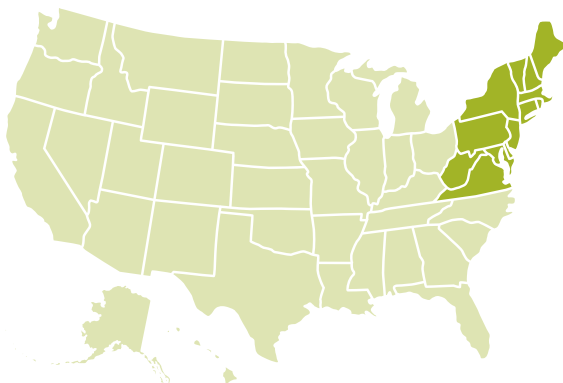
inches simply is not necessary when primary rough is maintained at a height that isn't much higher. Maintaining an intermediate rough that is susceptible to decline [takes a lot of time and resources](#). Eliminating collars and intermediate roughs provides an opportunity to reallocate time and resources to other, more impactful maintenance tasks like mowing primary rough more often. The USGA article [The Benefits of Eliminating Intermediate Rough](#) documents the labor hours saved and improved aesthetics observed when a course in Buffalo eliminated the intermediate rough.

If for some reason your facility can't shake intermediate rough, make sure you are investing in improved grasses when possible. Perennial ryegrass often is used for intermediate roughs because it tolerates traffic and low mowing heights and germinates quickly; however, it is prone to disease problems and intolerant of temperature extremes. Rather than spending so much time and resources on seeding ryegrass every year, try using turf-type tall fescue or improved bluegrasses like HGT® bluegrass. Both species have improved disease resistance and will survive the heat of summer better than ryegrass. The downside to seeding tall fescue is that they take a while to establish. If you want immediate results in high-traffic or high-profile areas like fairway landing zones, sod might be the better option.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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