

Dethatch Bermudagrass Before It's Too Late

By Brian Whitlark, agronomist, West Region | August 18, 2017



The combination of fertilizer inputs to encourage bermudagrass recovery from overseeding, recent rain and increased humidity has many courses in the West witnessing vigorous bermudagrass growth. Such rapid growth can make it difficult to keep up with mowing and often leads to mower scalping. A thick bermudagrass canopy is also likely to decrease the quality of the next overseed stand. Alternatively, thick, laid-over bermudagrass in roughs that are not overseeded leads to poor playing conditions during winter months.

Do not wait until overseeding to dethatch bermudagrass. Performing aggressive dethatching practices during late September or October reduce the ability of bermudagrass to store carbohydrates in underground rhizomes – a key to winter survival. Dethatching should be performed from early July through the end of August during weather that promotes rapid bermudagrass recovery. Dethatching during this time will facilitate overseeding preparation practices due to more upright bermudagrass growth and less thatch. Thatch-reduction practices will also improve the playing characteristics and aesthetics of roughs that are not overseeded as bermudagrass enters dormancy.

Golf course superintendents have found that dethatching practices can be completed using a variety of tools, some of which are listed below:

- Dedicated vertical mowing equipment
- Combined vertical mowing and vacuum equipment
- Frazee mowing equipment
- Flex-tine harrow – The USGA article, “[Getting Hybrid Bermudagrass And Kikuyugrass Rough To Stand Up](#),” contains more information about this tool.

In summary, take advantage of ideal growing weather for warm-season grasses and employ aggressive dethatching practices to better prepare playing surfaces for winter overseeding. For more information on warm-season turfgrass management, please contact a [USGA Green Section agronomist](#) in your area.

West Region Agronomists:

Patrick J. Gross, regional director – pgross@usga.org

Larry W. Gilhuly, agronomist – lgilhuly@usga.org

Brian S. Whitlark, agronomist – bwhitlark@usga.org

[Information on the USGA’s Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)