

# Watching Your Tees & Q's



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## Groom That Bent!

With the significant increase of bent overseeding on bermudagrass greens in south Florida, there has been somewhat less than adequate grooming of that bent during the winter months. Bent is a very delicate type cool season grass that requires specific cultural management to produce the highest quality putting surface when compared to ryegrass, fescues or roughstalk bluegrasses. Some even believe no grooming is required at all as the bentgrass has a very low vigor and therefore will not tolerate active grooming.

Actually, the contrary is true. Bentgrass does require some specific grooming during the winter and early spring months to provide the maximum quality playing surface and the best putting speeds possible. One of the

big reasons that bentgrass has been used as an overseeding is to increase the putting smoothness and putting speed during the overseeding period. Therefore, proper grooming is essential to maximize the speed which is the ultimate purpose of bentgrass usage.

Basically, the winter and spring months should consist of an active grooming period with the use of very light topdressings and brushes on the putting green mowers. The brushings used about three times per week and set at a height dependent on green undulations and the traffic amounts are very crucial in keeping the bentgrass at an upright growth habit and maximizing surface uniformity. This also helps keep the bentgrass from establishing too much lateral growth which in turn helps the surface uniformity and quality.

Light topdressings at about 1/8 cu. yd./1000 sq. ft. periodically during the growing season will further improve surface smoothness and be very beneficial in promoting the best quality bentgrass surface possible. The bentgrass has a stoloniferous-type growth habit and therefore light topdressings help promote a vertical growth habit much more vigorously. These light topdressings, as mentioned above, can be carried out about every three to four weeks during the growing season for improvement of the overall surface.

Again, everyone using bent overseeding should very carefully evaluate their grooming programs and consider a combined program of very light topdressings and the use of brushes. You will find that the use of these very stiff or even metal bristle brushes on the greens mowers are excellent aids with the bentgrass overseeding. Light, vertical mowings with the triplex units can be used in the late spring when it is time to thin the bentgrass and allow the bermudagrass to reestablishing a predominant cover. However, prior to this time period, the brushing serves as a very vital grooming tool without being too vigorous or even detrimental to the more tender bentgrass.

Experiment with these grooming practices this winter. I am sure you will find that their combined efforts will improve even an already excellent putting surface. ■

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