



BOMB AND GOUGE OR LIGHT AND FREQUENT VERTICAL MOWING?

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The “bomb and gouge” philosophy is popular and quite successful for the longest hitters in many professional golf events. However, applying the same strategy to fairway vertical mowing does not bode well for turf health nor the golfer experience.

There are instances where aggressive, deep vertical mowing in multiple directions is appropriate; but in most cases, this practice is discouraged because it results in long recovery periods, requires intensive labor inputs and can damage turf. It is better to conduct light-intensity, high-frequency vertical mowing practices to encourage upright growth on tees, fairways and approaches.

Courses in the West grow many different grasses on fairways and all will benefit from frequent, light-

intensity vertical mowing at the appropriate timing. A good guideline is to set the vertical mowing blades at half the mowing height. For example, when mowing at 0.5 inch, set the vertical mowing blades at 0.25 inch above the bottom of the rollers. Conduct this practice as often as twice monthly on warm-season grasses during the warmer months and on cool-season fairways in spring and fall.

Light-intensity vertical mowing will help to encourage upright leaf growth and minimize elongated leaf blades growing along the ground – i.e., grain. This practice is not disruptive to the playing surface, will only require a blower to disperse clippings and won't result in turf damage that requires time to heal. In summary, avoid the “bomb and gouge” vertical mowing philosophy and instead use a more consistent, light and frequent regime for better results throughout the year.

Please do not hesitate to contact the [USGA Green Section West Office](#) for more information on vertical mowing strategies or any other agronomic practices.



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

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