



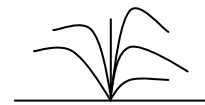
## WHAT ARE GROOMING AND VERTICUTTING?

David Weston writes about managing different types of grass on the Golf Course.

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These processes are usually carried out on the Greens to improve their putting characteristics.

Both are used to manage that part of the grass plant that is above the ground. Not all blades of grass grow upwards. Depending on the type of grass, and there are several different types in British greens, some blades grow at an angle, some branch and some, prostrate, lie parallel to the ground



As an exercise, try combing up a small area of grass on the back of a green, a green surround and a fairway. It is usually easy to comb up strands of grass much longer than the height setting for each of the three areas.

These are the prostrate grasses, missed by the cutters because they are lying along the ground.

The normal cutting cylinder will cut the three almost vertical blades of grass shown in the diagram but will miss the lower ones. Groomers are devices fitted ahead of the bottom blade of the greens' cutters that catch and lift each blade of grass so that it may be cut by the cylinder.

However, the groomers may well miss the lowest blade of grass, the prostrate one that is growing along the ground. At regular intervals it is necessary to ensure that these prostrate grasses are cut. Otherwise a golfer's shoe spike may well catch such a blade of grass and lift it, producing an imperfection on the green that may affect the roll of a subsequent putt. The Verticut units are fitted to the greens' machine in place of the normal cutting cylinders. The Verticut blades rotate on a horizontal axle parallel to the ground. The blades are set about 8mm apart along the axle, which is adjusted in height so that the blade points press lightly on the ground, the prostrate blade of grass is chopped by those spinning points.

Carrying out the verticutting process in one direction down or across the green will cut only those prostrate grasses that are lying at right angles to, or nearly so, to the direction of travel of the machine. In order to ensure that all the prostrate grasses are managed without seriously



affecting the health of the turf, the direction of travel of the machine is rotated through 45 degrees each time the units are used. The discerning golfer will spot when the greenkeeper has been verticutting by the faint parallel lines running across the green. Putts hold their line much better after the greens have been verticut and

they run faster. For that special tournament, the greens may well be double cut (each cut at right angles to the other) and double verticut (each verticut at right angles to the other, but at 45 degrees to the normal cut). This has the effect of increasing the speed of the greens for the same height of cut. Such a cutting regime cannot be sustained on a regular basis. Having too much plant material removed will weaken the sward. Using verticutting as a tool to be able to increase speed of the greens is always an option for the greenkeeper but having healthy disease resistant greens is more important to him and the long-term interests of the members than notching up another foot on the stimpmeter.

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