

Grooming Brushes



With newfound interest in recent years, the process of brushing to enhance putting greens has cycled through different phases in the past century. For decades, cutting heights have consistently been lowered to achieve a faster ball roll, thereby increasing the difficulty of play. As new cultivars were introduced, the cutting heights on greens began to reach extremely low levels – down to as little as 1/16 of an inch. At these very short heights-of-cut, the greens are extremely difficult and costly to manage, especially during stress periods. The renewed interest in greensmower brushes has surfaced, because improved brush designs offer another management tool to superintendents for meeting the high expectations of today's golfers.

When using the rotating brushes in a sound management program, superintendents perceive that brushing greens can:

- Create a smoother and more uniform putting surface
- Reduce grain in turf by lifting non-vertical grass blades vertically
- Cause less injuries to grass blades than vertical mowing (groomers) which allows more frequent use in less active growth periods
- Minimize Poa seed head (reduction)
- Promote healthier greens by removing decomposing materials
- Provide dramatic striping of the green surface
- Allow a slightly raised cutting height while maintaining the same ball speed

Brush Application

Adopting the practice of routine brushing using rotating brushes requires skill and patience to achieve the best results. Adjusting the aggressiveness / engagement depth of rotating brushes is critical for cultivating a superior putting surface that meets golfer's needs.

If using rotating brushes for the first time, we advise users to begin the new practice using very light settings because they may produce large amounts of defunct organic material until the turf is cleaned out. Positive results will sometimes take several days if your canopy is very thick.

While some superintendents experience positive results very quickly, it is much more likely that patience will need to be exercised for days or even weeks until the turf has time to conform to the new practice and until the adjustments to achieve the desired results are established.

A rule of thumb when using any new piece of equipment on a green is to play it safe. Best practice would suggest that you start high and work the adjustments down to the desired and sustainable height over time. Lowering the brush setting by a .005 increment each day, for instance, can have a considerable impact. Some superintendents prefer a more intense

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brushing program to achieve their desired result. End users should note that more aggressive brushing programs often require additional management and resources.

Caution: Adjusting brushes too aggressively from the start can easily damage the playing surface and counteract the benefits that the brushes are intended to deliver. Brushes and groomers are for light and frequent use. They are not to be used as vertical mowers or renovation tools.

How to use the Grooming Brushes most effectively

To achieve optimal performance, Toro offers a variety of brushes designed specifically for different types of grass. For example, a soft bristly brush is typically used for Bent grass, where Bermuda, Zoysia and other warm season cultivars are best managed with stiff bristle brushes. The following recommendations are presented here to guide superintendents in a way that helps manage seasonal growth patterns in different part of the world. The methods described are intentionally general and would need to be tailored to accommodate specific cultivars and individual golf course conditions.

- Creeping Bent grass tends to dominate northern climates. In the north, therefore, a mild brush is appropriate for the first several mowings and during the summer period amidst lack of growth. During lush growth periods in the spring and in late summer/early fall, the stiff brush is appropriate to control thatch build up.
- In southern climates, the stiff brush is recommended for predominant use; yet, a soft brush serves better during slow growth in the winter.

How to deal with Topdressing

Topdressing is another turf management tool that is being more widely used on greens today and with increased frequency and lighter application. Fine topdressing sands are expensive; therefore, it is important to properly work the sand into the greens canopy rather than removing it while brushing. If proper management practices are not followed, brushing has the potential to excessively remove the topdressing.

After topdressing, we recommend not brushing the green surface with rotating brushes for 2 or 3 days; light grooming could be substituted during that period if needed. That, of course, requires additional equipment or set up which might not be practical.

Brush Setting for Perfection Brushes

When using Grooming Brushes for the first time, you should always raise your mowing height 5 to 10 Thousandths of an inch. Toro's Grooming brushes will always give you a lower effective cutting height than groomers because effective brushing will stand the grass blades up for a much better cut, removing more grass in the process.

The setting for the height of the brushes will depend upon the denseness of the canopy. To start, the recommended setting for very dense greens is a brush height equal to the mowing height, lowering the height until the desired aggressiveness is met. After the brushes have been used for a week or two, then gradually lower your brush height as the grass is conditioned and the grass blades lying over the canopy are removed.

Accuracy in setting the brushes is imperative. Settings should be made with an Accu-Gage. A maladjustment by a mere 5 to 10 thousandths of an inch can be the difference between average and great results.

Note: Always set your brush height at the **high side** on the bristles, not the low or short side.