TURF TRANSITION

Turf may appear off color during transition.

It's Transition Time

As nighttime low temperatures in the Southwest start to creep up into the 60s, the Bermuda grass, which has been dormant all winter, begins to wake up and grow. As daytime temperatures exceed 90 degrees, the winter Rye grass should begin to recede. It is during this transition period where both types of grass compete for space and water.

> *"The best way to transition from winter Rye grass to Bermuda is to gradually lower mowing heights and reduce water.*

Transitioning from Ryegrass to Bermuda grass is, ideally, a gradual process that typically lasts from the beginning of April through the end of May; though the last several years have seen Ryegrass breeders producing varieties of grass that are much more tolerant of heat and drought. This often extends the transition period longer than desired.

What To Expect

Subtle changes occur in turf areas throughout the transition period. Irrigation Technicians monitor watering times in the common areas to encourage Bermuda grass growth. For this process, less water is used, not more. To suppress the Ryegrass growth, we gradually lower mower heights from 2 inches down to 1-1.25 inches.

As Ryegrass dies off, turf may appear off color or yellow and there may even be some areas that appear dry. This is a temporary condition that improves as the Bermuda grass fills in. Sometimes when the Ryegrass dies, it forms a thick mat which is easily removed with a verticutting machine. Once Bermuda grass is actively growing, ideally by early May, Ammonium Sulfate fertilizer (21-0-0) is applied to enhance color and growth and promote healthy turf.

Try It At Home

Transition will take place on a large scale in your common areas over several weeks and the same process can be applied to your yard. Gradually, lower the height of your lawn mower over the course of a few weeks and reduce the amount of water to approximately 6-8 minutes every 2 or 3 days. If you encounter some dead spots, use a hard rake to remove the matted Ryegrass. Apply Ammonium Sulfate fertilizer (21-0-0) at a rate of 5 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. of turf. By the 1st of June, your Bermuda grass will be ready for the summer months.

Did You Know?

Many landscapers and homeowners tend to over water. Use a screwdriver to test your lawn. If it goes in easily, there is plenty of moisture in the soil. If it's a struggle to push it, you probably need to give your lawn more water.

Dethatching for Healthy Turf

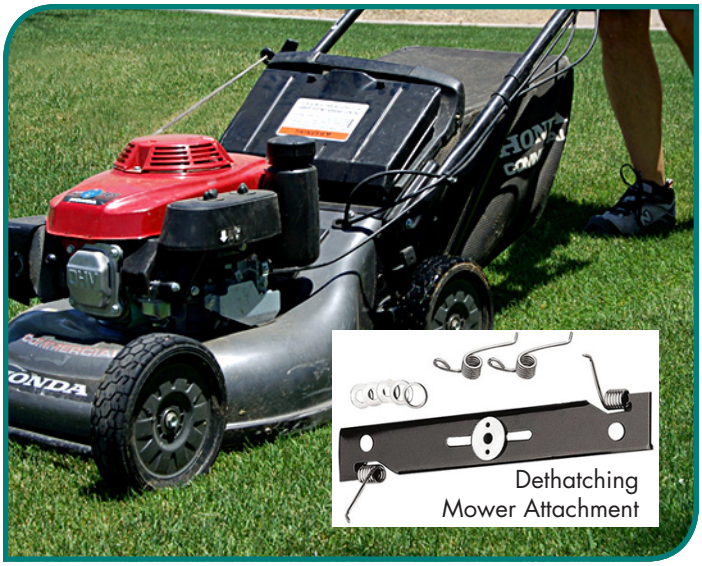
Dethatching is a perfect example of the saying "out of chaos comes harmony". Removing thatch from turf is not a pretty process, but the end result is well worth it. Dethatched turf will grow more uniformly, be healthier over all and better prepared for successful overseeding in the fall.

Thatch is matted, fibrous material between the soil and surface of the turf. Typically, it is caused by the accumulation of decomposing grass clippings and debris tangled with grass stems and roots; to prevent thatch buildup, use a vacuum mower each time you mow. Thatch is most often found in warm weather grasses that creep, like Bermuda grass.

Dethatching can be done several ways. You can remove the thatch by raking by hand, buy an attachment for your lawn mower (pictured at right), rent a dethatcher or hire a landscaper. For a residential lot, we recommend using the dethatching mower attachment, which can be found at your local home improvement or gardening store for a quick and cheap seasonal dethatching.

Once you dethatch, remove debris by hand raking or by using a catching mower. If you dethatch your turf during the growing season, it will recover quicker and look beautiful and healthy.

Dethatching turf brings debris to the surface



Before Dethatch

Turf may appear healthy on the surface, but below can be a thick mat of thatch which can cause hot spots and prevent nutrients and water from getting to the roots.

After Dethatch

Dethatching your turf will pull the thatch to the surface.

After Clean-Up

Completely removing and clearing debris from dethatching is important to ensure that turf can breathe and properly recover from dethatching.