Verticutting 101

**Why**
Verticutting is for thatch control and/or to prepare turf for overseeding. Thatch is an organic layer that develops between the soil surface and the turf canopy, mostly made up of non-decomposed stems. It indicates an imbalance in the turf management system simply because the soil microbial population cannot degrade the stems fast enough. Thatch is a haven for insects and fungal spores that can become problems during times of stress to turf.

**How**
Blades cut vertically into the turf canopy and sever lateral stems, thin grass and thatch. The tearing action can disrupt the playing surface similarly to core aeration. Thatch must be removed by raking blowing or sweeping. Leaving it on the turf will just add to the thatch layer.

Apply sufficient amounts of fertilizer and water after verticutting to promote rapid turf recovery.

You want to take advantage of the grass’s recuperative potential.

**When**
Examine your thatch layer by removing a core; if it’s definitely deeper than one-half inch, consider it time to dethatch. Do not however verticut before expected environmental stress. Warm-season turf the best time is late spring/early summer; when the turf-grass is actively growing; for cool-season spring is the best time and again late summer/early fall. You want to take advantage of the grass’s recuperative potential. Consider verticutting 1x per “growing” season.

**What**
Heavy thatch producers include bermuda-grass (after verticutting Bermuda, take the many live stems and use as part of some planting material), zoysia, and Kentucky blue-grass. An aggressive fertilization/use of N and irrigation program makes this situation worse. Perennial ryegrass and tall fescue produce less thatch.