

# As Easy as ABC



You never stop learning so, in conjunction with the GTC and lecturers from some of the UK's top greenkeeping colleges, GI has launched a new series which gives the developing greenkeeper the chance to add to their knowledge with some useful advice.



Gordon McGinn,  
South Ayrshire Council

## REFLECTIONS

A building is a very heavy object. The bigger the building the greater the weight, therefore the stronger the foundation needs to be to support it. When starting out on a career, the early stages are the foundation stages. The higher that you want to 'rise' in the industry the stronger the foundation you need to provide.

Everyone has acquired a range of knowledge and understanding particular to their own interests and experiences. Even though that may appear to have no relevance to the specialist discipline of greenkeeping many areas can be employed as an aid to understanding.

E.g. when you applied for your first post you may have prepared with training in interview skills, etc. Why? So as you could compete more successfully with the other candidates and exclude them from the post you have applied for.

Apply the same principle to golf greens; you want to make the fine grasses so successful that they can compete with and exclude a particular pest, e.g. Poa annua. Identify the strengths of the fine grasses, the weaknesses of the Poa annua - a bit like the stone, paper and scissors game from school days, each has a strength and a weakness.



Poa Annua



Fescue



### FINE GRASSES

**Weakness:** The fine grasses have narrower leaves (smaller solar panels), so they take in less light and make less sugar, and as sugar is used in the formation of living tissue, they grow more slowly.

**Strength:** The narrower leaves transpire (sweat) less so the plants can survive much drier conditions.

### COARSE GRASSES E.G. POA ANNUA

**Strength:** Broad leaves (bigger solar panels) so they take in more light, make more sugar, therefore make more living tissue, therefore they grow faster.

**Weakness:** The broader leaves have a bigger surface area so transpire more than fine grasses and they need much moister soils to stay alive.

### CONCLUSION

Provide your fine turf with a sandy texture, open structure and keep irrigation to a minimum. The fine grasses will survive and exclude the Poa annua that will die of thirst. The above is a very simple example of applying the principle of 'Competitive Exclusion'.

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