Microdochium nivale is the universal plant pathogen of temperate turf. Wherever turf is sown, laid and managed, as a professional playing surface in temperate climates, then M. nivale is never far behind. M. nivale is the well-known and well-worn disease of grass stems and leaves popularly known in the UK as Fusarium Patch.

Younger greenkeepers may wonder why a disease caused by a fungus named M. nivale is called Fusarium Patch since Fusarium is a fungal genus in its own right with dozens of different species. The reason is that for many years this fungus and pathogen of turf grass plants was officially called Fusarium nivale.

Greenkeepers can blame mycologists (people who study fungi) to thank for this ‘neo-Orwellian name game’. They will have changed the name in accordance with some obscure characteristic (like ‘bumps’ on the microscopic spores) which placed the fungus closer to the Microdochium genus than the Fusarium genus. In fact the change from F. nivale to M. nivale was simply the last of many name changes ‘ordered’ by mycologists since the fungus was discovered and described in 1825 as Lanosa nivalis.

Microdochium in a maritime climate

M. nivale performs best and leaves turf looking its worst in maritime countries with a classic mild, moist climate maintained by the benign influences of the ‘surrounding’ ocean and its associated currents and winds. For the UK and the Republic of Ireland, where turf damage caused by M. nivale is as bad as anywhere in the world, the environmental influences on which this fungus relies are The North Atlantic Drift (Gulf Stream) and predominant south-westerly (Prevailing) moisture-laden winds.

This geo-climatic preference closely matches the most favour ed environmental conditions documented for M. nivale – namely cool to mild periods (0°C to 15°C), with leaf wetness periods greater than 10 hours a day for several days on heavily thatched and slow growing turf.

However, M. nivale as a pathogen of turf is a lot more versatile than this. The fungus is capable of growth even at temperatures between 21°C to 25°C and as low as -6°C. This means the disease can be a significant problem on turf in most temperate climates, e.g. continental type climates with very cold winters but hot dry summers (central Europe and large parts of North America) and Mediterranean type climates (large parts of Australia and New Zealand) with their classic hot dry summers and mild wet winters.

M. nivale will clearly not be a problem all year round in these climates with their winter and summer extremes, but most will have at least one season or time of the year when weather and turf condition is conducive to high pathogen activity, manifested and expressed as Fusarium patch.

For instance, M. nivale is essentially a disease of Spring and Fall (Autumn) turf in many parts of Canada and the so called ‘winter grasses’ (temperate grasses), used to sustain and maintain turf during late autumn, winter and spring in the Adelaide area of South Australia with its classic Mediterranean type climate.

More specifically and separately, the capacity for activity at sub-zero temperatures allows M. nivale to cause a completely different disease under snow cover and called ‘Pink Snow Mould’.

The Canadian Conundrum

Situation surrounding M. nivale on professional turf in North America, and particularly in comparison to our Canadian cousins...
with the UK, is especially interesting. With snow cover a certainty in many US States and Canadian provinces much more attention is paid to the pink snow mould disease dimension of M. nivale. UK greenkeepers can expect turf to carry on growing right through winter to a greater or lesser extent depending on the area of the country. In contrast those managing golf courses in countries like Canada must cater for and cope with turf growth and activity completely shutting down during winter.

Turf grass plants respond to extreme low temperatures by going into ‘dormancy’ for their own protection and to ensure survival until the next growing season in spring. This will clearly affect the ‘nuts and bolts’ of any fungicide spray programme used, including timing of the last summer/autumn application and the first application in spring in anticipation of the resumption of grass growth.

For instance, autumn fungicide application in Canada is delayed until after extensive symptoms of Fusarium patch become apparent it may be hard if not impossible for greenkeepers to get rid of the disease because grass growth is slowing rapidly with the grass plants going into dormancy.

Separated by a common language

North American scientists and turf managers appear less ‘Luddite’ in their attitudes to changing the common names of turf diseases to suit the semantics of mycology and mycologists. The playwright George Bernard Shaw once said that Americans and British were separated by a common language. The potential confusion created by the many different names created for this turf disease either side of the Atlantic shows this to be true.

North American scientists and turf managers now invariably talk about ‘Microdochium Patch’. The turf industry in Britain allowed mycologists to change the name of the fungus from F. nivale to M. nivale then carried on calling the disease ‘Pink Snow Mold’. But as Dr Hsiang points out this began to cause a very awkward and indeed meaningless situation for regions of North America that very seldom experience snowfall, yet were having outbreaks of what was called a ‘snow mould disease’.

A more recent and equally unsatisfactory trend, especially in the U.S., uses Microdochium Patch for symptoms caused by M. nivale, whether they developed with or without snow cover.

Message from Canada is that despite Microdochium patch and Pink Snow Mold being caused by the same fungus the conditions under which they develop and spread and the type of symptoms expressed are entirely different. As such they should be regarded as completely different and separate diseases of turf.

However, the real clincher in Canada comes in spring and especially if the turf went into winter dormancy carrying extensive symptoms of Microdochium patch, and subsequently developed Pink Snow Mold under prolonged snow cover. As the snow melts in spring and the grass resumes its growth, classic symptoms of Microdochium patch develop on the turf grass around the edges of Pink Mold patches.

Pink Snow Mould or Microdochium Patch

Whether or not Pink Snow Mould and Microdochium Patch should be considered as different and separate diseases, albeit caused by the same pathogen, is a vexed question. It has certainly exercised the mind of Dr Tom Hsiang at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, a country which clearly knows more and better than most Americans refer to a turf disease caused in the absence of snow cover. The disease is more pronounced under longer snow cover and slower melts in spring enhance disease development.

There was an attempt in the late 1990’s to consolidate all common names (Fusarium patch, Microdochium patch and Pink Snow Mould) into ‘Pink Snow Mold’. But as Dr Hsiang points out this began to cause a very awkward and indeed meaningless situation for regions of North America that very seldom experience snowfall, yet were having outbreaks of what was called a ‘snow mould disease’.

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North American scientists and turf managers now invariably talk about ‘Microdochium Patch’. The turf industry in Britain allowed mycologists to change the name of the fungus from F. nivale to M. nivale then carried on calling the disease Fusarium Patch as though absolutely nothing had happened. The Canadians are in an even bigger quandary and conundrum being faced with the choice of the different spellings used in common names for turf diseases either side of the Atlantic Ocean (in US and UK).

In Britain we talk about ‘Pink Snow Mould’ while to the Americans it is ‘Pink Snow Mold’. Similary the Americans refer to a turf disease caused by Typhula spp as ‘Gray Snow Mold’ whereas in Britain we call the disease ‘Grey Snow Mould’. Prevailing advice in Canada is to use either but not to mix and match. Thus ‘Gray Snow Mould’ is a definite ‘no-no’.

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The amazing TriFlex Hybrid 3420 is the first Toro to feature an all-electric cylinder drive system for a greener mower. Since its launch, the Toro Greensmaster TriFlex range has been revolutionising greens mowing. Designed and built from the ground up, the TriFlex Hybrid 3420 and its TriFlex 3400 stablemates are both packed with ground-breaking technology and deliver an unrivalled quality of cut and exceptional finish.

Check out the unique cutting unit suspension system and DPA cutting units that hug ground contours for superb cutting consistency. Added to that, the redesigned button-style tyres that make tracks virtually invisible. What’s more, the TriFlex has been built with the operator firmly in mind. This includes quick-change cutting units that can be switched instantly to other units all without tools. Discover the Greensmaster TriFlex range for yourself, call us on the number below and join the revolution!

Call 01480 226800 or visit www.toro.com
Chalara ‘genie’ out of the bottle so what comes next?

Dr Terry Mabbett, who broke the news about the chalara ash dieback outbreak in GI September, returns with an update on this constantly evolving issue.

The chalara ‘genie’ is out of the bottle. By year end chalara ash dieback caused by the fungus Chalara fraxinea was recorded at 323 sites covering woodlands.

Golf courses anywhere in the UK are now at risk. There is no chance of eradication so what’s the situation and what comes next?

Many courses have young common ash trees along fairways or in the rough. Others have old ash trees in prominent positions as hedgerow relics from previous farmland. Some courses have tiny ash copies because the pioneering trees are adept at colonising any vacant land.

Under no circumstances should greenkeepers plant any more common ash (Fraxinus excelsior) or related species like Fraxinus angustifolia (narrow leaved-ash) because many are also at risk. Disease is spread by spores formed in fruiting bodies on infected leaf litter from June to October which then infect the current season’s foliage during wet weather.

Woody tissue may already be infected thus requiring removal and destruction of affected trees, but the only symptoms are bark lesions on young trees. Even these may be absent because the pathogen has a long period of hidden infection.

Potentially infected mature ash trees are more difficult to assess. They may show crown dieback in summer - but don’t jump to conclusions because many fungal diseases produce similar symptoms.

Start to inspect all ash trees now. Suspected outbreaks should be reported to the UK plant health authorities.

Reporting chalara ash dieback and obtaining information

In England and Wales:
- Broadleaved: 01722 716880 - 9am-5pm (except Bank Holidays)
- Conifer: 01931 246924 - 9am-5pm (except Bank Holidays)

In Scotland:
- Commission: 0131 314 6156 (9am-5pm weekdays + out-of-hours 55 77 (open 8am - 6pm every day)
- 08459 337755 Chalara helpline

Start to inspect all ash trees now.

Suspected outbreaks should be reported to the UK plant health authorities.

Dr Glynn Percival, a plant physiologist with Bartlett Tree Experts (a commercial company at the forefront of oak processionary moth control) has proposed micro-injection of pesticide, used in North America on their ‘private’ turf rather than private sector experts treading on well known beverage, access to those parts others cannot reach.

Two problems stand in the way: one practical the other political.

There are no fungicides approved by CRD (the UK’s Chemical Regulations Directorate) for tree injection. Word on the grapevine is that the plant health ‘mafia’ is opposed to the idea. This may more to do about private sector experts treading on their ‘private’ turf rather than sound scientific objections.

However, they do appear to be quietly listening to what Dr Percival has to say. DEFRA has since contacted agrochemical manufacturers and asked them to put forward candidate fungicides for appraisal. If micro-injection comes to fruition, one or more of the hydramist fungicides currently used to cure Fusarium patch of turf may be used to control chalara dieback in ash trees.

Fungicides are not the only line of defence against Chalara fraxinea, Defra’s report also notes that young trees are adept at colonising any vacant land.

Relying on young trees to colonise vacant land is a good line of defence - but the only way to prevent the spread of disease is to be on the lookout for the symptoms and act early.
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Late last year, the then Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (MAFF) used to manage Dutch elm disease (Hymenoscyphus ulmi fungus) into trees. These outbreaks provided a dose of truly systemic fungicide. They were unable to reach the top branches of big elm trees where bark beetles were discharging fungal ‘cargoes’ (spores of the Ophiostoma novo-ulmi fungus) into trees. These drawbacks were not due to any deficiency in tree injection as a concept but still left a legacy.

Modern micro-injection is unobtrusive and not accompanied by collateral bark damage. Contem-
Steve Castle visits Easingwold Golf Club to see how an ambitious tree management project has transformed the course – at very little cost.

Take a look at the photographs in this article. Can you believe they were taken just a few months apart? Easingwold Golf Club has transformed a stagnant, shrouded course into a healthier, brighter, blooming vista for play.

Course Manager Andre Erlah joined the six-strong greenkeeping team at the parkland course in 2001, and began by introducing a full aeration programme. He explained that previously the club were stuck in a vicious circle. “They knew they should aerate but the members didn’t want their rounds to be disrupted so they just put fungicides down.” However, the looming long-term issue, which was literally preventing the club’s growth, was the sheer proliferation of trees on and around the course in this rural corner of North Yorkshire.

Andre admits it was impossible to accurately gauge how many there were - but there was no doubt there were far too many and they were largely in the wrong places, threatening the very future of the course. “There had been no tree management at all since it first opened in 1930”, he says. “A lot of planting had been done in 1976 and over the years the course became very dense and dark, giving me problems keeping the tees, greens and fairways in good shape. In fact it was so dense some areas of the course never received any natural light at all because of these big scrub oaks, birches and pines. Even on the brightest summer...
Seeing the light

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“There had been no tree management at all since it first opened in 1930”, he says. “A lot of planting had been done in 1976 and over the years the course became very dense and dark, giving me problems keeping the tees, greens and fairways in good shape. In fact it was so dense some areas of the course never received any natural light at all because of these big scrub oaks, birches and pines. Even on the brightest summer...
The flags on some of the greens would flutter in the breeze, but when you squatted down to ground level there was no air movement whatsoever.

“This meant the greens became stagnant leading to disease and poor drainage - if you've got a mature tree in competition with grass for water and nutrients the tree is going to take everything. Also, the sheer number of trees meant we had very limited traffic routes around the course which were leading to problems with compaction.

Yet another reason was from a golf strategy point of view – certain trees were continuing to grow and preventing our members from playing certain shots.

When the sun does come out the course is bathed in dappled light instead of darkness. "Ultimately the course is healthier, drier and more aesthetically pleasing" says Andre, who trained at Reaseheath College in Cheshire. "I've loved doing it, it's made a difference."

"Of course some people were nervous about the project, but we were absolutely convinced it would be hugely beneficial for the club long-term."

"We worked out that he could take the brash away and sell it to nearby timber merchant.

"There was an industrial chipper here filling up three barches a day."

"He would then make money on it later."

"Crucially, because Andre and his team had communicated the project to members, they were mostly on board – some even giving up their time to help out grinding the tree stumps left behind."

"Our main outlay was £9,000 for a stump grinding machine."

"We were quoted around £400 at Beak Mill which is quite a good price."

"We worked solidly for five months removing the trees we had highlighted as problems."

"Luckily we had a reasonably dry winter which helped."

"It was staggering to see how much timber was produced."

"There must have been 2,000 stumps to grind but with everybody mucking in we kept to our schedule."}

"Andre and all at the club were 100% behind us.

"We got permission from our landlord, and enlisted John to obtain the necessary felling license from the Forestry Commission."

"We placed a big sign at the first tee spelling out clearly to our members what we were doing and why we were doing it."

"I was trained up to use it, and when members came forward offering their help one day a week I trained them up.

"There have also been other bonuses."

"Last year we saw new flora and fauna never seen before."

"There are foxgloves everywhere, bluebells are blooming that never had a chance before."

"One member was even encouraged to plant hundreds of bluebells, confident they will grow in this environment."

"There are frogs everywhere, bluebells are blooming that never had a chance before."

"Some members complained that they had a particular affinity with certain trees which they had enjoyed watching flourish over decades."

"It's still ongoing – we've broken the back of it but still need to thin some trees out and make other amendments.

"But we're on top of it now."

"Still ongoing – we've worked with some of the best in the business."

"Mature oak trees with real character have flourished."

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“This meant the greens became stagnant leading to disease and poor drainage - if you’ve got a mature tree in competition with grass for water and nutrients the tree is going to take everything.

“Also, the sheer number of trees meant we had very limited traffic routes around the course which were leading to problems with compaction.

“Yet another reason was from a golf strategy point of view – certain trees were continuing to grow and preventing our members from playing certain shots.

“It turned to the greens chairman and told him I’d gone as far as I could with the course until we solved the tree problem.”

“The club met with renowned woodland consultant John Nicholson who produced a report which supported Andre’s beliefs, and outlined which trees required removal.

“However, the club soon realised the cost for the work would be very substantial which was out of the question – particularly with the recession hitting.

“But they came up with an ingenious solution with the help of a nearby timber merchant.

“In the autumn of 2011 we approached the merchant literally opposite the course, wondering if they would be interested in doing the job.

“We worked out that he could take the brush away and sell it to power stations, saving us thousands of pounds.

“Luckily as he was so close this removed the haulage costs which normally absorb all the profit from the timber.

“He would then make money on selling the felled timber as logs.

“This meant we could confidently go to our committee explaining how this was the ideal opportunity to go ahead with the plan and they were 100% behind us.

“We got permission from our landlord, and enlisted John to obtain the necessary felling license from the Forestry Commission.

“We placed a big sign at the first tee spelling out clearly to our members what we were doing and why we were doing it.

“The contractors came in and worked solidly for five months removing the trees we had highlighted as problems.

“Luckily we had a reasonably dry winter which helped.

“It was staggering to see how much timber was produced.

“There was an industrial chipper here filling up three lorries a day.”

“Crucially, because Andre and his team had communicated the project to members, they were mostly on board – some even giving up their time to help out grinding the tree stumps left behind.

“Our main outlay was £9,000 for a stump grinding machine.

“We were quoted around £400 a week to hire one so it was far better to buy, and we would be able to sell it later.

“I was trained up to use it, and when members came forward offering their help one day a week I trained them up.

“There must have been 2,000 stumps to grind but with everybody mucking in we kept to our schedule.”

Andre and all at the club were well aware of the potential controversy associated with removing certain trees.

“Some members complained that they had a particular affinity with certain trees which they had enjoyed watching flourish over decades.

“It’s a strange issue - I heard an agronomist say removing a tree reminds people of their own mortality! We did check before removing certain trees that had been planted as a memorial.

“But we’re on top of it now.

“Any member who had been here for years amazed they were finally playing in daylight!

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“Last year we saw new flora and fauna never seen before.

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“One member was even encouraged to plant hundreds of bluebells, confident they will grow in this environment.

“Mature oak trees with real character have flourished.

“Taking on similar bright afternoons, the previous jungle has been transformed.

“Ultimately the course is healthier, drier and more aesthetically pleasing when previously it was stagnant and you can actually appreciate individual trees.

“You look back at the photos of the course before this project and you can’t believe how messy and dark it was.

“It’s still ongoing – we’ve broken the back of it but still need to thin some trees out and make other amendments.

“But we’re on top of it now.

“Tired of doing it, it’s made a huge difference to the course and I feel I’ve made my mark.

“I’ve left a legacy here now which makes me feel extremely proud.”

Woodland Management Workshop

A seminar to showcase the work at Easingwold Golf Club will be held on Thursday 21st March 2013 beginning at 9:45am. Speakers will include Andre and John.

Full details can be viewed at www.thegfc.co.uk and www.greenkeepertraining.com. The cost is £65 per person with lunch included.

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The pictures graphically show the difference.

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North East

As I'm writing this section there's news of some snowflakes falling at the moment. I used to enjoy this white stuff but now prefer it on a Christmas card. At least I can still see what I'm eating when those things have included as usual.

Spring outing will be held at Balgash during the second week of May. I have been been to go Barnburghs trip to San Digo - neither is likely and the feedback was positive. The Autumn outing is planned for September for those of you who are interested. In the meantime, remember any news for me just get in touch. Jimmy Richardson

West

New year greetings to all and hopefully we have been all busy making the course playable and not causing any problems. Nothing to report here in my small world.

Next week section meeting is on Tuesday 19 February please try to attend some of them. We start looking to save money do so by throwing more of the wet stuff at us then we face a near impossible task. I am sure that the golf courses in this area are in great hands and we will deliver. We have just got to get stuck in and try and give the members a good reason to play, yes I understand it's cold but at least we get the chance to work on the course beforehand.

That's all for now, feel free to contact me if you have any news and I will look forward to seeing you at Hornsea. Have a good golf outing from BTME please let us know.

Andy Slingsby
07750407867
Andy.slingsby99@gmail.com

North West

By the time you get these notes I hope that those that could attend BTME had a very enjoyable time. At the moment at my golf club we are suffering as I'm sure many are from the effects of the weather over the last season. These times are hard for many of us and I am hearing of many clubs having to make budget cuts to make ends meet. We all just got to get stuck in and try and give the members a good reason for them to stay. I think there are some clubs out there that are not so busy and maybe we should be looking at some of these clubs and see how they are doing it. I hope many of you paid for reading. Martin

North Wales

The shortest month deserves a pretty short column so let's see how few words I can do this month. The course is a bit better after I started his captaincy at the Vale Golf Club with a drive-in on 15 January, best of luck trying to wear two caps as I was doing it! I hope I don't do as well as I did at the Vale last year like the last one…as I write this report the doom and gloom merchants from the weather service tell us that we are going to have a bad few weeks ahead. It's cold weather and I'm looking out of my window at big flakes of snow. As normal for this time of year it's very quiet on the news front but BTME next year should have a bit more gossip for you soon. I won't be there this year as I'm in for a bit of knee surgery. Hopefully you should be getting your future list for this season this month so please have a good look at it. You will agree that we are playing the golf course in the season (as always) so make a good effort to attend some of them. We start the fun at Whinmoor on the 24 April and we have a new format to find our scratch champion with the combined scores from Hornsea and at least we get a chance to have a look at how the members are doing on the course. That's all for this month – chainsawing! Yes it's month – chainsawing!  Yes it's time again for the annual winter competition. I have been told by the Director recently addressed the old ‘chestnut’ of why clubs keep adding members and maybe that's why the West has turned so many years of happiness together.

And last but not least, I will remind you once again if you can make it to the next BTME in the March issue, but until then I hope everyone has a great day out and keep well.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any events pending, you can get in touch on 01914228821 or 07790829314, or by e-mail on stuart.taylor@glassgowgolfclub.com.

The next west section committee meeting is on Thursday 21 February please try to attend some of the meetings. I have been asked to attend a team's performance course for BTME. I have passed this information on to HQ so if any more of you are interested watch out for it appearing on the forum or website. If anyone has anything to share or news then please contact me on 07840707678 or e-mail jshahan@blueyonder.co.uk.

Chris Sheepan

Cleveland

Hello everyone, my name is Martin Woods, if you don't know me, you're about to. I have been working at Bedlingtonshire Golf Club and your guest writer for the next couple of months. News from my course this month - championship! Yes it's true! And the weather was been pretty good too. It was fairly dry and I hope people have enjoyed the course. As I write this report the doom and gloom merchants from the weather service tell us that we are going to have a bad few weeks ahead. It's cold weather and I'm looking out of my window at big flakes of snow. As normal for this time of year it's very quiet on the news front but BTME next year should have a bit more gossip for you soon. I won't be there this year as I'm in for a bit of knee surgery. Hopefully you should be getting your future list for this season this month so please have a good look at it. You will agree that we are playing the golf course in the season (as always) so make a good effort to attend some of them. We start the fun at Whinmoor on the 24 April and we have a new format to find our scratch champion with the combined scores from Hornsea and at least we get a chance to have a look at how the members are doing on the course. That's all for this month – chainsawing! Yes it's time again for the annual winter competition. I have been told by the Director recently addressed the old ‘chestnut’ of why clubs keep adding members and maybe that's why the West has turned so many years of happiness together.

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Chris Sheepan

North

On behalf of the committee