Weeds are plants in the wrong place and all broad-leaved plants are weeds in managed turf. Rough grasses such as (Yorkshire fog) and Anthoxanthum odorum (sweet vernal grass) and even perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne), the latter widely used in amenity and non-fine sports turf, are weeds in professional sports turf.

MANagers wanting greens dedicated to fine turf grasses like bents (Agrostis spp) and fescues (Festuca spp) regard Poa annua as a weed, ‘cut and dried’. Others happily tolerate and use Poa on golf greens and tees.

Deciding which plants are weeds is the easy part - identifying them is the harder part. Grouping plants, whether by weed characteristics or plant family, is the easiest way to proceed. Sorting out the Asteraceae (e.g. dandelions and daisies), Fabaceae (clovers), Ranunculaceae (buttercups), Rosaceae (cinquefoils) and Plantaginaceae (plantains) takes around half of turf weeds out of the identification equation.

That done you are left with small distinct groups and individuals such as the plantains, slender speedwell, self-heal, mouse-eared chickweed, sorrel, parsley, dock, knotgrass and field woodrush (main image) to identify and deal with.

Common weed characteristics

Turf weeds have one or more characters in common:

• Ground hugging habit with growing points close to the soil surface to escape the mower’s blades

• Rosette arrangement of leaves and/or mat growth habits blocking light and shade out grasses

• Underground food storage organs like tap roots for anchorage and survival under adverse conditions. Ability to grow new plants from pieces of tap root left in the ground after unsuccessful attempts at physical removal

• Efficient vegetative reproduction by stolons (creeping stems) that ‘slip’ through the turf rooting as they grow to make new plants. Ability to grow new plants from stem pieces detached during mowing.

• Choreographed sexual reproduction with flower heads at ground level, a long flowering period sometimes throughout the year (ephemerals). Short seed maturation period, efficient seed dispersal, no special seed germination requirements and accumulation of large seed banks outside of turf

• Resistance to drought and tolerance of herbicides

Weeds in managed turf

Dandelions and lookalikes (Asteraceae)

A common characteristic of the Asteraceae is composite flower heads of many individual flowers called florets. Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) and daisy (Bellis perennis) are the most well-known of this plant family.

Dandelion’s success is down to a strong deep seated tap root and a rosette of large light blocking leaves. Dandelions flower through spring and summer to generate large seed banks outside turf. Prostrate biotypes growing in fine turf bear short-stalked flowers which escape mowing.

As summer turf dries out dandelions are matched by weeds which closely resemble dandelions and have the same weed credentials. Most common is cat’s ear (Hypochaeris radicata) with rosettes of leaves close to the ground and long fleshy tap roots with similar capacities for regeneration following unsuccessful attempts to dig them out. Prolific seed set and efficient
wind dispersal of hairy fruits, like those of dandelion, allows efficient colonisation of threethreaded turf.

Smooth hawk’s beard (Crepis capillaris) with rosettes of jagged leaves is very hard to distinguish from dandelion, but the flowers are smaller with several per stalk. Like leaves is very hard to distinguish capillaris) with rosettes of jagged colonisation of threadbare turf. Those of dandelion, allows efficient wind dispersal of hairy-fruits, like Turf Weeds

Yarrow leaves are hard to wet making it difficult resistant to drought. Yarrow leaves waxy leaves make yarrow high fast spread, while the finely divided stems root at intervals facilitating the worst weed the Asteraceae has to large seed-banks such as those both frequently found on tees close and sowthistles (Sonchus spp), common ragwort (Senecio jacobea) germination sites. These include parsley piert allies found in fine turf can invade and exploit damaged turf on tees by using, can replaced divots as germination sites. These include common ragwort (Stenocereus jacobea) and sowthistles (Sonchus spp), both frequently found on tees close to large seed-banks such as those on railway embankments.

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) is the worst weed the Asteraceae because a number other plants which are not generally found in fine turf can invade and exploit damaged turf on tees by using, can replaced divots as germination sites. These include common ragwort (Stenocereus jacobea) and sowthistles (Sonchus spp), both frequently found on tees close to large seed-banks such as those on railway embankments.

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Smooth hawk’s-beard (Crepis capillaris) with rosettes of jagged leaves is very hard to distinguish from dandelion, but the flowers are smaller with several per stalk. Like dandelion it has a long flaccid tap root and is just as difficult to shift.

Mouse-ear hawkweed (Hieracium pilosella) lacks a tap root but also colonises threadbare turf. A rosette of jagged leaflets, with oval prominently lobed leaf, are distinguished by the latter having ‘no’ leaf stalk. P. lanipes, whilst plantain has a rosette of lance-shaped leaves. All thrive in shaved turf on dry, well-drained soils.

Die-hard duo

Slender speedwell and self-heal are two totally unrelated weeds, among the most frequently occurring and difficult to shift from fine turf.

Slender speedwell is not the sort you notice until its mauve-blue flowers appear in spring. Though rarely setting viable seed it is one of fastest spreading weeds of managed turf. Moving spreads slender speedwell, the pieces of cut stem carried on grass cutting equipment to fall off and root elsewhere.

Self-heal is one of the smaller members of the mint and nettle family (Labiatae) with prostrate biotypes common in managed turf. Prostrate creeping stems root at the nodes to make compact spreading plants. Self-heal is unlikely to go unnoticed in turf. From June to October erect and square cross-sectioned (angular) flowering stems bear thick, tubular clusters of tiny bright blue flowers.

Tiny trio

Tiny turf weeds are difficult to spot in the cold light of late winter afternoons, when greenkeepers get their first insights into what spring will bring. These include parley pear (Aphanes arvensis) with bushy parsley-like leaves and creeping hairy stems, dove’s foot cranesbill (Geranium molle) a tiny wild geranium with spreading stems, pink flowers, long-beaked fruits and prominently lobed flat leaves which give the name; and tufted leaf rosettes of pearlwort (Sagina procumbens) the most diminutive of all.

A rash which looks like a grass

Field woodrush (Luzula campestris) looks and grows like a grass which makes it difficult to distinguish virtually impossible to control with herbicides without damaging turf grasses.

Field woodrush shows up during spring as large patches of chestnut-coloured panicles (flower heads) evident on fairways, especially if mowing is delayed by very wet weather.
Open Support Team
Volunteers 2013

How you can follow in the footsteps of golfing legends at Muirfield 2013

Do you fancy the chance to work at The Open Championship 2013...with the once in a lifetime opportunity to walk alongside the world’s leading golfers at one of the finest courses in the world?

This was the amazing reward for several days of extremely hard work – and lack of sleep – for BIGGA members from across the UK, America and Australia at the thrilling Open at Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club last July.

In 2013, the legendary links at Muirfield in East Lothian host the Open and you could be there as a member of the Open Support Team, with support from the team at BIGGA HQ.

The first tee shot will be struck on Thursday 18 July, with the final putt sunk on Sunday 21 July. As anyone who has previously worked as a member of the Support Team will tell you, it’s extremely hard work with early mornings preparing the course for the likes of Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy and reigning champion Ernie Els.

There may also be late nights on duty duty.

But, as previous attendees testify, the experience is one to tell the grandchildren about – not to mention a chance to enjoy the superb camaraderie within the team and meet members from across the world.

You will receive accommodation, food, daily transport to the course, a waterproof suit and polo shirts – all you have to do is make your way to Muirfield.

The application process is transparent and we’ll then allocate all play their part in ensuring a successful tournament.

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