An increased prize fund...the chance to play on a course which hosts European Tour qualifying a week previously...picturesque heathland surrounded by rare flora, fauna and wildlife...what further incentives do you need to enter the 2013 BIGGA National Championship?

Most of the impressive 700-acre, 54-hole complex is a Site of Special Scientific Interest – so while you’re hitting over the pond and dodging the greenside bunkers on the par three 9th, or attacking the long par five 10th, you may catch sight of a red kite, woodpecker or some of the rare orchids.

Pilfield Heath was first awarded European Tour qualifying three years ago – a real feather in the cap of the club’s ambitions. The qualifying – and the BIGGA National – take place on the Red Course with the Green and Blue courses remaining open throughout. Course Manager Sid Arrowsmith was quick to insist that nothing radically changes during that week although he acknowledged it is a big test for the team. “Some may think it’s daunting to host these events, but we run at a high standard all the time so for a European Tour event it’s not as if we have to lift it up by, say, 25% - we’re always at tournament standard so it just requires a bit of fine tuning. “This may mean double cutting on a morning with a double or single iron but nothing too major. The height of cut remains the same at around 2.5mm.

October is a challenging time of year to host prestigious events, because of course the light is limited in the morning and in the evening. “There are 240 players starting the qualifying at 7.45am, yet sunrise is at around 6.45am so we’ve only got an hour to work on the course, so we try and do as much work as possible the evening before.”

To help direct most of our available resources to the Red Course. “It’s all about the team ethic. I’ve got some wonderful guys here who have never worked anywhere else and they deserve great credit. We have a Head Greenskeeper on each of the three courses, five assistant greenskeepers on each and two full-time mechanics.”

So what else can BIGGA members bidding to win the first prize of £500 - and the BIGGA Challenge Trophy - expect? “It is a very stern test of golf – a true heathland challenge. There are lots of obstacles such as gone just off the fairways which can really hurt you. You’ve got to hit long and straight, it’s a demanding 6,912 yards. There’s a lot of risk and reward golf - if you want to take the big stick out and try and get the distance there are birdie opportunities.

“But, if it doesn’t quite come off you will be harshly penalised. It’s a varied challenge from hole to hole.”

Sid explained the changes they’ve made in a bid to re-instate the Red Course’s place in the Top 100 Courses in the UK list. They have built new tees, put in some new bunkers and replaced old sand with new in others, as well as putting drainage sumps in some of the sand traps.

He added: “The greens are a blend of Agrostis grasses and poa annua – and the worst majority are natural heathland greens. We’ve tried to produce better performing greens by reducing organic material – thatch – then diluting it with pure sand so the greens become firmer, faster and improved. The thatch coverage has never been bad but it’s just been a little more than I would ideally like.

“We’ve also started using a Clegg Hammer as well as the stumper and moisture meter to check the smoothness, trueness and firmness.”

The Clegg Hammer measures impacts on the surface which gives you a firmness reading. We got some readings of 120 which was too hard so we aim for 100 – really firm, fast greens.

Last year at the European Tour qualifying the greens were running at 11 and we were asked to slow them down – it made my day! So we missed the second cut out and we took the turf iron out to take them down to 10.5.”

The team follow identical aeration programmes on each course. They micro hollow tine twice a year – usually in March and then in July or August, and aerate deep with the aid of a machine they’ve recently purchased called GP Air. This is basically a spear which has compressed air pumped into it. It’s then plunged into the turf and shatters the soil underneath, allowing quick and easy drainage.

Sid explained that over time, the silt particles in the greens migrate downwards, allowing quick and easy drainage.

“Last year at the European Tour qualifying the greens were running at 11 and we were asked to slow them down – it made my day!”

EQUIPMENT LIST

Some of the key machines in the team’s fleet...

GREENS MOWING: TOBO 3150 x 12, TOBO FLEX 21 x 3
SURROUND MOWERS: TOBO 3100D x 4 FAIRWAY MOWERS, TOBO 5510 x 3 SEMI ROUGH MOWERS, TOBO 4500D x 2 JD OUT FRONT MOWERS x 2
AERATION: TERRA SPIKE x 1 TOBO PRO CORE SR72 PLANET AIR x 1 GP AIR x 1 TOBO HYDRAJECT x 1 SHATTERMASTER JD AERCORE
SPRAYERS: TOBO MULTI PRO 5800 x 1 GAMBETI BAR x 3 BUNKER RAKERS: TOBO 5400 x 3 BLOWERS: TOBO PRO FORCE x 1 TORNADO BLOWERS x 2 TURF ROLLERS: TRU TURF x 2 VIBRATING ROLLERS x 1 CUT AND COLLECT/LEAF COLLECTION: AMAZONE GHS 180 x 2 UTILITY VEHICLES: TOBO MDX WORKMAN x 6 JD GATORS x 8 TRACTORS x 13 ALL JOHN DEERE
BERNHARD GRINDING EQUIPMENT: EXPRESS DUAL 4000 ANGLEMASTER 4000 TOP DRESSING: DAKOTA 410 TURF TENDER

Applied as a spray, the Silica and Potassium content of Spike increases plant cell wall turgidity and stimulates a more erect leaf blade to allow for more uniform and consistent cutting. Pre-tournament applications improve surface playability and provide rapid wear recovery.

- Stimulates a more erect leaf blade
- Improves ball roll consistency
- Increases greens speed
- Promotes the rapid healing of ball and spike marks

Combine with Magnet Rapidie for superb surface colour.

Make your greens the tournament talking point!

For a whole new ball game

Stimulate the more erect leaf blade
Improves ball roll consistency
Increases greens speed
Promotes the rapid healing of ball and spike marks
Combine with Magnet Rapidie for superb surface colour.

Freephone 0800 424919
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machine ‘blasts’ this layer to help the infiltration.

The site also features acid grassland and ancient fenland, and some of the older trees were felled recently to rehydrate the fenland. In turn, this encouraged natural flora and fauna to return, which allowed various species to flourish. Burrowing wasps, rare beetles, treecreepers, hawthorns, red kites and kingfishers can be spotted by the more eagle-eyed golfer.

Lancastrian Sid worked at various courses in the UK before becoming part of the team constructing Golf D’Apremont, a course 40km north of Paris. He was then Head Greenkeeper at Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland before joining Frilford Heath in February 1994. He turns 60 this year – so what advice would he give young greenkeepers?

“It’s absolutely vital to keep abreast of all issues, developments and changes – whether they be environmental, technical or mechanical. I achieved my Master Greenkeeper Certificate in 1997. It’s not made me a better or a worse greenkeeper – I did it for my own personal CPD.

“The whole picture is important – the way you dress, portray yourself at meetings and social events, how you speak to the members…if you want respect you have to conduct yourself in the right manner.

“I never stop seeking ways to educate myself further and keep improving. I remember going to BTME, sitting with the likes of Walter Woods, Jack McMillan and George Brown and just letting their knowledge rub off on me.”

Sid and I then headed up to the clubhouse balcony which overlooks the 18th green, and his thoughts returned to the BIGGA National.

BIGGA members hoping to follow in the footsteps of current champion Oly Browning can play two rounds of golf plus dinner on the Monday evening for just £90. There are prizes for best gross and nett scores plus various prizes for nearest the pin and longest drive.

“I’m looking forward to hosting the guys even though I’m sure some of them will be picking holes in elements of the course!

“That’s natural for greenkeepers and I’m looking forward to meeting them all. I’m also playing in it so we’ll see what happens there!”

See you in October.
so much so that some were seen wearing large sombreros to keep the sun off, and which also saw one forgetful greenkeeper cover himself in sun lotion, and then try and play the next few shots with sun lotion on his hands and grips. There was also a near emergency call out when John Shepard ventured into the long rough to retrieve a ball, only to find the rough taller than him and thus lose his way back to his team! The course was in fine condition and a heartfelt thanks go to Malcolm and all of his team for allowing the section to play their prestigious course and for the condition in which it was presented, well done all. I am sure that you will all join with me in wishing Neil Durant, Head Greenkeeper at Dale Hill Golf Club a speedy recovery following a serious illness that had left him hospitalised for some time.

Surrey - Seminars over the winter period are in the planning process, Date TBA, intention to have 5 or 6 educational events at Merritt Wood College.

**Events Coming Up**

**Essex** - Next golf day Thursday 15 August at Channels Golf Club. Bacon roll and coffee from 11.00am. 18 hole Stableford this event is the National Qualifier, two places up for grabs, plus a BBQ afterwards, £20 members/sponsors, £30 guests, cheques made payable to “BIGGA Essex” please!

This event was a great success last time around, so don’t miss out on a fun day with good food and camaraderie.

Entries to Antony Kimura, at “Play Golf Colchester” Bakers Lane, Colchester, Essex. CO3 4AU or antz16@btinternet.com by Saturday 10 August please.

Membership clarification will be required prior to your playing at all events this year please.

Details are on the website, under Competition Rules 2013 this is within the golf section of the website.

We have also decided to sell our raffle tickets before you play, rather than budge you afterwards. This we hope will speed things along and allow you all to sit down for your dinner quicker upon your return from the course.

Tickets will be on sale when you collect your scorecard. Enjoy your day at Channels. “So you want to be promoted?...” Ben Scrivener is still waiting to hear from you. We would like to arrange an evening with Murray Long and Matt Plesed for all you young greenkeepers. If you are interested contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the Green...

**Results**

**Essex** - Away day: Longest drive, John Hill. Nearest the pin, John Shepard. Nearest the pin in two was Matt Hutchinson.

Nearest the pin in 3 was Graham White. In the team competition 3 The “Seasfood” boys with 86pts. 2 “Team Mitchell” with 88 pts. 1 the “Tortillas” with an incredible 97 with a blip of 0. Once again thanks to all attendees for supporting the section on this away day.


**Welcome New South East Members**

Danny Perks, Greenkeeper, Wentworth Club (The), Surrey

Mark Ogden, Course Manager, Drift Golf Club, Surrey

Neil Hitchgote, Assistant Greenkeeper, Cottamore Golf Club, Surrey

Sean Blyth, Greenkeeper, Goodwood Club Ltd (The), Sussex

Simon Berry, Greenkeeper, Goodwood Club Ltd (The), Sussex

Christopher Ahier, Greenkeeper, Hassocks Golf Club, Sussex

Jamie Chapman, Assistant Greenkeeper, Hendon Golf Club, London

Louis Dunn-Allen, Assistant Greenkeeper, Hendon Golf Club, London

Jamie Chapman, Assistant Greenkeeper, Hendon Golf Club, London

Christopher Ahier, Greenkeeper, Hassocks Golf Club, Sussex

Jennie Skilnick, Assistant Greenkeeper, Wycombe Golf Club, Buckinghamshire

Jamie Chapman, Assistant Greenkeeper, Hendon Golf Club, London

**Contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the Green...**

**Note:** If you would like to hear more about the BIGGA National Championship in Frilford Heath Golf Club please contact Keith Taylor at: keith@taylorgolf.co.uk for further details or to register your interest.

**Deadline for entry is 6th September 2013.**

The main tournament for the Challenge Trophy will be played over 36 holes, medal play, with the best overall gross score producing the BIGGA National Champion, who must be a greenkeeper member. The greenkeeper player with the lowest nett score will be presented with the BIGGA Challenge Cup.

There will be prizes for the first five over 36 holes in the gross category. The top three in the nett competition will also receive prizes. After each day of 18 holes there will be prizes for winners of handicap divisions.

The BIGGA Regional Team Cup and prize will be calculated from the 8 best nett scores over the first day of play. There will also be various nearest the pin and longest drive competitions, featuring prizes.
A day in the life

Six months after his first greenkeeping crash course in Cheshire, Steve Castle joined the team at Immingham Golf Club the day before a major event with hundreds due to attend. What could possibly go wrong?

Back in November I experienced my first proper day in the life of a greenkeeper at Lymm Golf Club which featured digging drainage trenches in torrential rain – so I was extremely pleased to see the sun shining brightly as I headed for Immingham Golf Club, near Grimsby in Lincolnshire.

The club’s four greenkeepers – Steve Beverly, Robin Portess, Rob Bemment and Malcolm Holden – arrived well before I turned up at 7am to continue preparations for the next day’s Charity Golf Day, with 130 people expected to play.

My first impression was that the parkland course – which opened in 1975 as a nine-hole venue before being extended to 18 holes in 1985 – genuinely looked superb, taking on a vibrant green hue in the sunshine.

However, I quickly discovered there was still much hard work to complete behind the scenes to fine-tune the course ahead of one of its most important days of the season. Head Greenkeeper Steve said: “It’s vital to have the course looking its absolute best. As well as the money that will be brought in tomorrow, we want to convince some of the players to return and ultimately to become members. It’s all about word of mouth, if they tell people they’ve enjoyed it and it’s a first-class course more and more people will come and play here.”

It would be no exaggeration to say the club exists on a shoestring budget, and have had to deal with problems ranging from disastrous floods to vandalism. It’s been a challenging time for Scouser Steve who joined the club from Cleethorpes Golf Club (where he was Deputy Head Greenkeeper) in 2006.

“In June 2007 this area suffered horrendous flooding. We had 331mm of rain that month, to put that in context the next highest since I arrived was 154mm in June last year. Part of the course is below sea level and that flooded very badly, and it’s clay-based so the water had nowhere to go. Everyone described it as a once-in-a-lifetime month, I just hope they’re right!”

Steve confirmed that the team had to take a pay cut at the height of the club’s financial problems in 2010, and the newest machine the club owns is a five-year-old Toro Groundsmaster 7210. He added: “You have to balance out the cost of continually repairing against the cost of new machinery. These machines are expensive to buy new so generally we all muck in and repair them when something breaks.”

As we worked our way around the course he showed me how to trim the holes – exactly the sort of task I did not appreciate as a casual golfer before I joined BIGGA but am now well aware of. It was clear attention to detail was absolutely vital as the club sought to convince many of the next day’s punters to return.

This brought us on to the inevitably thorny issue of money in an area which is one of the least prosperous in the UK.

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My first task was to help Steve empty the bins and ball washers next to the tees, and we began just yards from the impressive club house. He then paused to point out a strange track running through a bunker. I was bemused until he wearily explained the cause.

“Someone’s cycled through this. We’ve really suffered with vandalism. We’ve had flags stolen or chucked in the pond and greens dug up – but what can you do? We have CCTV, but we can’t put a huge fence around the entire course. We just have to deal with it when it happens.”

Steve confirmed that the team had to take a pay cut at the height of the club’s financial problems in 2010, and the newest machine the club owns is a five-year-old Toro Groundsmaster 7210. He added: “You have to balance out the cost of continually repairing against the cost of new machinery. These machines are expensive to buy new so generally we all muck in and repair them when something breaks.”

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My favourite machine was the Toro Groundsmaster 7210. It’s controlled with an unusual (to me) pair of hand-held levers. This took a little bit of time to adjust to, but within a few minutes I was confidently driving it around and having more fun than was strictly necessary.

Later, Steve and I spent much of the day painstakingly raking the club’s 44 bunkers. He showed me how to take the soil from the bunker and put it all on the bunker after another tough day, but in fact the opposite was true. Robin quickly got some practice in on the putting green (the whole team are very keen golfers with low handicaps) and we then headed for a well earned drink in the clubhouse.

A couple of members were very keen to praise the course despite the harsh economic realities. Comments included “it looks and plays fantastic”, “these lads are doing a great job” and “it’s the best course in the area”. I’ve been made well aware that BIGGA members feel their tireless work is sometimes unappreciated by many golfers at their clubs, so it was refreshing to hear this positivity. The only complaint I heard was that Immingham – with its tough par threes and fours, some blind tee shots and undulating fairways – was too hard! Steve says: “It is a tough course and probably doesn’t get the credit it deserves. Like any course you take care with your course management – and hit it down the middle it won’t go far in trouble!”

I then noticed that a window on the second floor of the clubhouse was being repaired. I feared another sad tale of mindless vandalism until Robin started laughing, and tried to explain how one visiting golfer had managed to break a ball through it while practising in a net far below. He said: “He must have accidentally hit it back off the iron frame, it’s sailed just past his head, shot 20 feet up and gone through the window. It was like CSI Immingham the next day with us all trying to work out how he’d done it."

All in all, a hugely enjoyable and informative day and I left knowing I’d discovered a hidden gem of a club.

We’re proving here that you don’t need a massive budget to create a great course. The team have a genuine affection for the club and each other. At 3pm, you might have expected them to have sprinted off home after another tough day, but in fact the opposite was true. Robin quickly got some practice in on the putting green (the whole team are very keen golfers with low handicaps) and we then headed for a well earned drink in the clubhouse.

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Later, Steve and I spent much of the day painstakingly taking the club’s 44 bunkers. He showed me the correct technique – and also showed me how to take the soil temperature, something he does every day – before he continued on the financial theme.

He said: “At BTME I heard a greenskeeper say he spent £7,000 on a single bunker. That’s fair enough if you’ve got the money but that’s a different world to us. Sustainability is all very well. But that’s a different world to us. It’s not financially viable.”

By the end of the week – a big saving in time and money.”

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Invasive weeds are damaging and difficult to control but Japanese knotweed, the general name given to a group of species belonging to the genus Fallopia (family Polygonaceae), and native to Japan and parts of China, stands head and shoulders above the rest. In their native stands head and shoulders to Japan and parts of China, Polygonaceae, and native to the genus Fallopia (family Polygonaceae), and Japanese knotweed – one of the most invasive weeds you will come across.

How lethal injection is the best way to tackle Japanese knotweed – one of the most invasive weeds you will come across

Invasive weeds are damaging and difficult to control but Japanese knotweed, the general name given to a group of species belonging to the genus Fallopia (family Polygonaceae), and native to Japan and parts of China, stands head and shoulders above the rest. In their native Asian range they are primary volcanic colonisers and generally far less vigorous because plant growth is kept in check by co-evolving natural enemies and pathogens.

The species of Japanese knotweed usually found in the UK is Fallopia japonica var. japonica, introduced from Japan two centuries ago. Japanese knotweed continues to destroy ecosystems and urban infrastructure and is one of few herbageous weeds requiring direct placement of herbicide inside the plant to ensure quick complete control.

The introduction of Japanese knotweed as an ornamental plant into early Victorian gardens must have seemed like a good idea at the time but it has left a huge and growing weed legacy. Capacity for vegetative spread in situ through enormous fast growing and resilient rhizomes, made easier by the very nature of its favoured riparian and urban environments, is the secret of Japanese knotweed’s success.

Dense growing stands restrict access for riverbank inspections and increase flood risks through large quantities of dead stems and leaves washed into rivers and streams. Attempts to remove established stands from riparian areas can cause instability in river banks and increase the risk of soil erosion. Urban site infestations cause considerable damage to hard surfaces. With stems than can penetrate concrete tarmacs, no barrier to Japanese knotweed. The severity of Japanese knotweed is clear to see from the legislation used to limit spread and damage. It’s scheduled under the 1961 Wildlife and Countryside Act making it an offence to plant or cause it to grow in the wild. It is also classified as ‘Controlled Waste’ under the Environment Protection Act (1990) and must be disposed of or a licensed landfill site in accordance with the Environment Protection Act (Duty of Care Regulations 1991).

A multi-faceted weed

Red-coloured, spear-like aerial shoots emerge in spring - reaching 30cm by April and forming a massive foliar canopy two to three metres tall by summer’s end. Plants produce large numbers of white flowers in summer but hardly any viable seed, probably due to UK climatic restrictions on sexual reproductive development.

Above ground stems die back and dry out in autumn, but overwintering rosettes and rhizomes (underground stems) are so fast growing, all pervading and consuming that nothing else stands a chance - even during the only ‘knotweed-free window’ during late autumn and winter. Dead stems and leaves decompose very slowly to form a deep litter that prevents the germination of other seeds.

Failure to produce viable seed is more than compensated for by a fast growing and robust system of rhizomes allowing Japanese knotweed to exploit and dominate environments through vegetative propagation.

Rhizome systems may extend up to 3m from the parent plant and to a depth of 3m. Rhizome fragments as small as 0.7g can generate new plants and pieces of fresh aerial stem will grow shoots and roots in soil or water. Plants achieve up to 3m of aerial growth and 6m of rhizome growth in a single growing season.

New shoots arise from the tiniest pieces of rhizome and cut stem-sections will root at the nodes. Crowns can survive drying or composting to produce new canes once in contact with water. Attempts to mechanically control Japanese knotweed using strippers, flails or diggers can aggravate spread.

Herbicide application

Application of herbicide is the only sure and safe way to manage Japanese knotweed but this is easier said than done due to the sheer size and resilience of its rhizomes. A number of herbicides are effective against Japanese knotweed but by how much and for how long depends on the application technique used. Application technique will ultimately determine the success of chemical control against Japanese knotweed.

Spraying with contact herbicide will burn off the leaves but rhizomes survive and produce new stems. The only sure and safe way to dispatch Japanese knotweed is by placing a systematically acting herbicide (most usually glyphosate) into the plants by injection of intact standing stems low down and at the most appropriate time of the growing season.

Target area is the lower part of the aerial stem to minimize the distance for downward translocation into the rhizome system. Best time is...
Turning Japanese

How lethal injection is the best way to tackle
Japanese knotweed – one of the most invasive
weeds you will come across

Invasive weeds are damaging and difficult to control but Japanese knotweed, the
general name given to a
group of species belonging
to the genus Fallopia (family
Polygonaceae), and native
to Japan and parts of China,
stands head and shoulders
above the rest. In their native
Asian range they are primary
volcanic colonisers and
generally far less vigorous
because plant growth is kept in check by co-evolving natural
biological control agents,
including arthropod natural
enemies and pathogens.

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In contact with water. Attempts to
proposing to produce new canes once

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Failure to produce viable seed
from Micron Sprayers in action.

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Inset Left: How shoots
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Urban site infestations cause
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JAPANESE KNOTWEED

28 JULY 2017

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from late summer through autumn when rhizomes become sinks for soluble food and nutrients which is translocated downwards from the leaves before these senesce and fall off. Injected systemic herbicide is subject to this same strong basipetal (downward) translocation into the rhizome system which is subsequently killed.

Death by lethal injection

Japanese knotweed’s hollow stem is its ‘Achilles Heel’. Professional stem injection applicators designed and dedicated to control of hollow-stemmed weed plants such as Japanese knotweed are available.

Stem injectors used to control Japanese Knotweed include:
• ‘Injectordos’ from Micron Sprayers at Bromyard, Herefordshire.
• ‘JK Injection Tool’ from Stem Injection Systems at Stockport, Cheshire
• ‘Stem Master’ from Nomix Enviro at Andover, Hampshire.

Stem injection does a truly ‘inside job’ on Japanese knotweed and is used with good effect on other invasive weeds such as Himalayan balsam, Giant Hogweed which also have hollow stems. Stem injection is something most golf courses can carry out using their own resources.

Use of these relatively lightweight and small applicators mean operators can access and treat the most dense stands of Japanese knotweed. By providing a closed delivery system the technique can be safely and effectively used at any time including during rainfall. The closed highly targeted delivery system means there is no danger of product escaping into the environment to damage nearby plants. Also, by delivery of a measured dose into the hollow stem, the injection technique can usually achieve ‘death by lethal injection’ in one application.

Complete Weed Control offers a specialist contract service for the eradication of all problem weeds, wherever they appear including:

- Total weed control – Hard, soft and gravel surfaces
- Selective weed control – For control of broadleaf weeds in grass
- Aquatic weed control – Management of submerged and floating weeds
- Chinese control – In turf, plants and trees
- Grass growth control – Retardation of grass growth in all areas
- Insect control – In turf, plants and trees
- Fertiliser application – Liquid or granular
- Lawn care
- Winter protection
- Weeds & algae control
- Worms control
- Lawn ringers
- Afforestation
- Worms & algae control
- Pest control
- Disease control
- Grass growth control
- Insect control
- Total weed control
- Selective weed control
- Aquatic weed control
- Disease control
- Grass growth control
- Insect control

Experience plays a major factor in successful treatment. Knowing when and how to apply the appropriate product can speed up eradication and save time and money. All work is undertaken adhering to strict health & safety guidelines.

about the author

Dr Terry Mabbett
Dr Terry Mabbett is a disease, pest and weed control specialist and is currently a serving member of the National Committee of the Weed Research Organization. He currently researches, advises and lectures on all aspects of Japanese knotweed and related invasive species.