

## Using Goats To Control Difficult Weeds

**Cohasset Golf Club**  
Glen Misiaszek, CGCS, superintendent

**Cohasset, Mass. 02025**

### Issue

Cohasset Golf Club is a Donald Ross design with holes weaving through the rocky coastal terrain south of Boston, Massachusetts. Extensive tree work at the course has opened up woodland areas, improved turf growing conditions and exposed natural rock outcroppings. Fine fescue and other native grasses were planted in many of these areas to recapture the original look of the golf course. Superintendent Glen Misiaszek, CGCS, soon realized that it would be challenging to control briars, thistle, poison ivy and other woody and herbaceous plants in the new native areas and along woodland edges.

### Action

Rather than using traditional herbicides, Misiaszek decided to try using animal power to manage unwanted plants. Goats and sheep seemed like a logical choice for the site and Misiaszek was able to find a local farm that had animals available. Cohasset Golf Club was the farm's first landscape management



*Goats are an effective and captivating option for managing hard-to-control vegetation in naturalized rough areas.*

client and they have since formed a company specializing in those services. The farm provides the animals, electric fencing to keep them confined in target areas, and hay for additional feed. Employees from the farm rotate the goats through different native areas identified by Misiaszek, allowing them to graze until they consume most of the unwanted plants. The maintenance staff follows behind the goats to cut down any remnants of grazed vegetation.

## **Results**

Using goats to help manage native areas at Cohasset Golf Club has been successful on several fronts. It allowed Misiaszek to eliminate herbicide applications in these areas, saving time and money. There was also an estimated 75-percent reduction in the labor hours required to maintain the native areas. Golfers enjoy watching the goats work and the maintenance staff appreciates reduced exposure to poison ivy, briars and ticks.

There were several challenges involved with using the animals, including keeping them contained and secure. Electric netting is used to contain the goats, but it quickly became apparent that they were able to jump over the fences and out of their enclosures. The fences were modified to better contain the animals and keep them safe from predators. In addition, a local rule was created to address a golf ball coming to rest within a fenced area.

The members and staff at Cohasset Golf Club are pleased with the results of the new native area management program and plan to continue using the animals. They are currently exploring different fence options and larger paddock sizes that enclose up to 10,000 square feet. Creating larger grazing areas will extend the time between paddock shifts and provide more space for the animals to roam.