

Time to Whack Some Weeds

By **BOB VAVREK**
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Long stretches of cool days and cold nights during April and May set the stage for a considerable amount of weed encroachment into fairways, roughs, and bunker banks this summer. Dandelions, clover, and other weeds had little competition from slowly growing turf. To make matters worse, once the weeds became established, the cool weather limited the effectiveness of herbicide applications. For example, two or three herbicide treatments were often required to control dandelions because single treatment did little more than curl the leaves when night temperatures dropped into the forties.

When the hot weather arrived during mid-June and stayed through August, playing surfaces dominated by *Poa annua* began to thin out. Crabgrass and knotweed were more than happy to fill into the voids. Goosegrass, an uncommon weed in the upper Midwest, was seen on worn practice tees as far north as Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Annual weeds, like crabgrass and knotweed, will die off after the first few hard frosts. Now is the time to map heavy weed infestations and target these areas for spot applications of pre-emergence herbicides later this fall or next spring. Superintendents have had good success using Gallery during late fall or early winter to control next year's crop of knotweed. Spring pre-emergence treatments for knotweed rarely produce the desired result because this weed germinates very early during the spring.

A variety of pre-emergence and post-emergence materials are available to control crabgrass. Most pre-emergence herbicides are applied during the spring. Some gamblers apply Barricade during the fall to control crabgrass germination the following spring. This is a risky practice in areas that have a history of winterkill. Treated turf that experiences winter injury could not be overseeded until the herbicide barrier dissipates. This is more of a concern at old courses where the playing surfaces are typically dominated by *Poa annua*.

A dense healthy stand of turf is still the best defense against weed encroachment. In long run, installing a few more sprinklers across high traffic areas of droughty roughs can be less expensive than the cost of annual weed control. Also pay attention to traffic patterns. Knotweed thrives in heavily compacted sites, and is often a problem across areas of concentrated cart traffic. Simply rerouting traffic patterns more often or installing a paved surface can shift the competitive advantage back to the turf.

Take soil tests from roughs that have a history of weed problems. The fertility program may need to be kicked up a notch. Granted more fertilizer means more mowing, but it's not a bad trade off if the turf is healthy and golfers find fewer weeds to complain about.

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On the Road With the USGA

By R.A. (Bob) Brame, Director

Recent visits (last week of August) have revealed a lot of tired superintendents and maintenance staff employees. It has been a challenging summer and the stress is beginning to show. However, for the most part golf courses have come through the season in reasonably good condition. Clearly, there are some battle scars, but the playability of most courses has remained quite good. Irrigation system limitations have been exposed for all to consider, and hopefully this will result in positive moves toward improvement. Although, there is a real danger that fall rains will erase the memory of poor irrigation system performance this season.

Most golf courses visited over the last seven to ten days have begun gearing up for early September aeration. Hopefully this is true of your course as well. While September is a great month to play golf, it also is the time to begin strengthening the turf for next summer's battle. Aeration and fertilization are vital components in next season's dependability and as such, should receive the right-of-way over any one golfing event.

Disease activity has subsided to a gentle rumble over the last few weeks from what was experienced in July and early August. There has been a resurgence of dollar spot disease activity, which clearly underscores the need to keep up the guard for a few more weeks. Allowing a preventative spray program to drift into a curative mode and dropping out other maintenance strategies like dragging dew can open the door to significant dollar spot disease activity. Also, gray leaf spot disease is active in the region. Those with perennial ryegrass should keep a close vigil.

No grub damage has been sighted over the last few days, but Japanese beetles have been seen as recent as the last week of August. Keep a sharp eye out for grub damage and the potential need to spot treat.

Although it has been a fairly common topic on recent visits, so far there are no known cases of courses upping the ante with mosquito control as a result of the West Nile virus. However, dead crows have been noted on a few courses and in each case local authorities have stopped checking for the virus as it is known to be present. Clearly, this is a topic that will receive ongoing monitoring.

There is a growing trend to address needed tree management work a bit more proactively. Hopefully the trend will continue as too many courses continue to be plagued with too many trees. If you are planning late fall/winter tree work, now is the time to finalize the list. Avoid like the plague any type of marking on the targeted trees themselves. This is sure to draw unwanted attention and ongoing debate.

Don't put away those hoses for hand watering/syringing just yet, however, there is light at the end of the tunnel. As always, give us a call should concerns exist that we can assist with. Equally, let us know if the summer has brought any unique issues or relevant tips that would assist others.

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