

## Using Controlled Burning To Manage Naturalized Areas

Wyncote Golf Club  
Mark McGreevy, head greenkeeper

Oxford, Pa. 19363



*Controlled burns are a cost effective and environmentally friendly way to manage naturalized areas.*

### Issue

Wyncote Golf Club is a public golf facility located in the rolling hills of southeastern Pennsylvania. The golf course is cut out of farmland, using natural terrain to add to the intrigue and beauty of the property. Wyncote also features over 60 acres of naturalized areas. Maintaining playable conditions and managing weeds over such a massive acreage proved costly, time consuming and difficult. Consequently, many of the naturalized areas became overrun with weeds, reducing their playability and aesthetic appeal. Lost balls were common and unhappy golfers wrote negative online reviews.

### Action

Superintendent Mark McGreevy developed numerous weed control trials and repeated them over several seasons in an effort to find an effective method for managing the

naturalized areas. The trials included various combinations of physical weed removal, pre- and post-emergence chemical applications, repeated mowing and controlled burning. During the years of trials, adjustments were made to develop a system that was effective, repeatable and affordable.

## **Results**

Mr. McGreevy determined that preemergence herbicides were necessary to manage weeds in the short term, but that the desired results could eventually be achieved with annual controlled burns. This is a cost effective and environmentally friendly way to manage naturalized areas. Controlled burns in the naturalized areas at Wyncote yield the desired aesthetic and playing characteristics without the need for expensive chemicals. Now, golfers can find and play their ball when it enters a naturalized area. This improves pace of play and overall golfer satisfaction.

A challenging aspect of this program was communicating the value of controlled burns to golfers. Through outreach efforts, and with the help of organizations like Audubon International, golfers came to understand the value of controlled burns and the method for performing them. Most importantly, they saw positive results on the golf course and appreciated the improved playing conditions and aesthetics.