



Weed Management for Florida Golf Courses¹

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INTRODUCTION

A weed can be defined as any plant out of place or growing where it is not wanted. For example, bahiagrass is considered a weed when grown in a pure stand of bermudagrass but is highly desirable when grown in a monoculture such as a golf course rough. In addition to being unsightly, weeds compete with turfgrasses for light, soil nutrients, soil moisture, and physical space. Weeds also are hosts for pests such as plant pathogens, nematodes, and insects. Certain weeds are irritants to humans when allergic reactions to pollen or chemicals occur.

The most undesirable characteristic of weeds in turf situations is the disruption of visual turf uniformity. This happens when different (a) leaf width or shape, (b) growth habit, or (c) colors are present. Many broadleaf weeds such as dandelion, plantains, and pennywort have a wider leaf than the dominant turf species. They also have different leaf shapes. The growth habit of smutgrass, goosegrass, vasegrass, and thin paspalum, results in clumps or patches that also disrupt turf uniformity. In addition, large clumps are difficult to mow effectively and increase maintenance problems. The lighter green color typically associated with certain weeds such as annual bluegrass in a golf green often distracts from the playing surface.

WEED OCCURRENCE IN TURF

Weed control for turf managers can be a difficult chore due to several reasons. Florida, unlike most parts of the country, has a very mild climate with few deep freezes. As a result, many traditional annual weeds behave as semi-annuals or even perennials. For example, year-round weed pressure can occur in Florida from annuals such as crabgrass and goosegrass, but in most parts of the country where frost occurs, these die out yearly. Florida's mild climate also allows the growth of many sub-tropical and tropical weeds that do not occur in any other location in the country. As a result, little research has been performed on their susceptibility to most herbicides.

Much of Florida's soils also consist of sands. As a result, many herbicides are not retained in the upper soil profile as well as in heavier soil and this reduces their effectiveness time. The effectiveness times of herbicides are further shortened due to Florida's year-round mild weather and adequate amounts of rainfall. These conditions encourage quicker breakdown by soil microorganisms.

Florida's mild climate also encourages other year-round pest problems which injure and weaken the turf stand. These weakened or bare turf areas allow

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