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SUNDAY, 26 MAY 2013

Changing My Weed Management Approach

Lately I have begun to change the way I approach weeds in the landscape. In my experience over the past decade I have seen a lot of weed management failures, not just on the golf course but also on people's home lawns. I have noticed a few things and here is what I have got.

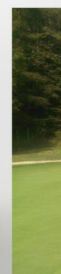
The principle is this: Instead of focusing on the pest, focus on the desirable species. It might sound easy but it is really a hard thing to do.

Take dandelions in your home lawn for example. When dandelions sprout on most people's lawns their first reaction is "what do I apply to kill these dandelions?" While this is a fantastic short term solution it really solves nothing over time and not after long the lawn is usually plagued with more dandelions. Instead of focusing your energy on the dandelion focus on the needs of the turf. The dandelions aren't the issues. The turf that is weak and unable to out-compete the dandelions is the real issue. I am often approached by members telling me I better cut the seed heads and flowers off the dandelions before the seed blows onto the fairways. I have never done this because I grow good grass. Twelve years on the job and no increase in weed populations. Dandelions aren't going to grow where good grass is growing plain and simple.

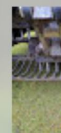
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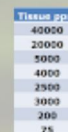
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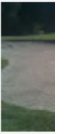


Brown un-irrigated area is mostly dandelions
get over it.

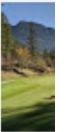


Areas where we can grow good grass there are virtually
no weeds.

Another common weed issue I see on people's home lawns is moss. For some reason people hate moss on their lawns and I just can't figure out why. It's green and requires virtually no maintenance so what's the problem? Most people's attempts to kill the moss actually do more harm to the turf than the moss. Liming and applying high levels of iron can help with the moss but do little to help the turf perform well enough to compete with the moss. It seems that the harder you fight the moss the more moss you end up having. The moss isn't your problem here, your crappy grass is!



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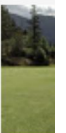
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This isn't a moss problem, it's a lousy grass problem.

I am constantly asked by the public what I use to control weeds on the golf course. My answer is "we haven't used a herbicide on our fairways in 10 years!" and they are always surprised because in their view there are very little, if any, weeds on the golf course. The truth is that there are lots of "weeds" on the course they just don't notice them because there are very few weeds for the size of the turf area. We employ sound turf management practices and don't strive for perfection. Perfection when it comes to weed management is sometimes achievable but no one really notices, or cares. Instead we focus on the big picture and do whatever we have the resources to do to make our grass out-perform the "weeds." If we can do this we can easily keep control of the weeds using manual removal using hand tools.



White clover barely affects play and most people don't even notice it especially from a distance.

There are some areas of the course that are mostly weeds. These areas are typically on steep slopes that aren't irrigated, fertilized, or aerated because we simply just can't on that terrain. Of course I could spray these areas to kill the dandelions but why? So more can grow back? The only time I would use a herbicide to control a weed is if I was able to correct the underlying issues that permitted that weed to exist in the first place. If you can't grow good grass in that location there is absolutely no point in trying to kill the weeds, right?



Un-irrigated rough, yep this is all I can expect.

This kind of thinking is what many turf professionals do every day even if we don't realize it at first. For me this simple change in thinking has really helped my efforts to grow good grass and stop killing the weeds.

Posted by [Jason Haines](#)



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