

from the sidelines

# Vern on weeds

**Jeff Borger knows** his grassy weeds and he's happy to talk about it. Jeff, who is better known to his buddies in the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO) as "Vern," is an instructor of turfgrass and weed management who has spent a lot of time at Penn State's Valentine Turf Research Center learning how to kill plants. Here are some points he made during a presentation at KAFMO's Athletic Field Conference:

"Factors to think about when you want to remove weeds, poa annua, or poa trivialis (rough bluegrass) include what type of sport is played on the field, what the wear is, the number of events played," Borger said. "Where is the poa? Can you live with it in a certain spot?"

As an example Borger cited the Penn State Lady Lions' soccer field, which is almost 100% poa annua. "In this case, the 'weed' is your friend," he said.

"Annual poa has a growth habit; it germinates, grows, and dies all in 12 months," Borger said. "When you are seeding in the spring, realize if you have a void somewhere, the poa will grow there. Then you have the natural decline in summer and fall germination, which is a good time to use a pre-emergence herbicide. Cool season turf growth habits are slower, so poa grows faster in the spring."

He also asked that you think about your cultural practices. "Aerifying can serve as an over-seeding program for poa. And it is easy to move poa seeds to other spots in your turf, with your spreader or mower. Keep one mower for the poa field if you can. And watch where you're walking, the poa seed can be spread even by walking," said Borger.

Use a light, slow-release fertilization in summer when the poa is weaker versus the turfgrass, Borger recommended, and also consider physically removing the poa with a cutter. And of course, if you have the resources, removing everything and re-sodding is an option.

Post-emergence herbicides can work, but Borger cautioned to read the fine print. "Don't apply to any excessive wear areas. And when using these products, go by the plant itself, not the calendar, in making decisions," said Borger. That being said, you've got to know when to get the herbicide down. "For example with the product Prograss, you must apply before the snow that stays on the ground," said Borger.

He said weeds could grow in synthetic infill fields. Using Roundup or pulling them out is the only solution there.



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