

Information for the Removal of Ground Elder and Horsetail

These weeds are on the increase particularly in boundaries, fruit areas and paths where they are not regularly cultivated, weeded or cut. These weeds can have dreadful consequences for the site as they have deep roots which can travel distances. Members must be aware and work to remove them. They are difficult to dig out as they have a resilient root structure but constant mowing/weeding will eventually work to limit them. Last year we had to reclaim one plot after 4 years of neglect and this had very significant bramble boundaries, ground elder and bindweed. The new members have grassed it after the initial working party/ machine clearance and they will be mowing weekly as generally only grass will survive this treatment.



Ground elder (Ground elder has apple-green, lobed leaves and flat heads of cream-white flowers in summer. It spreads rapidly and can creep between cultivated plants. It has large clumps of foliage. It dies down below ground in winter, which means it's difficult to spot when cultivating the soil. However, it's capable of re-growing from fragments of root, making it a particularly virulent plant. It is rampant and competes with cultivated plants for light, water and nutrients.

Organic Solution -In existing cultivated areas it's best tackled by digging up the cultivated plants and washing their roots to tease out the cream-white roots of ground elder. Regular cutting of the foliage, just below ground level with a hoe will gradually weaken the plant, but this needs to be done every 7-10 days, as soon as re..growth appears. Alternatively, fork through the soil every 10 to 14 days, removing every piece of ground

elder root that's found.

Chemical - Apply systemic weed killer to the foliage as soon as it appears in spring. Re-apply throughout the growing season at four- to six-week intervals, or as soon as any re-growth appears. Richard has had more success with vinegar applied to the roots

Horsetail is a deep rooted herbaceous weed with tough, light brown or bright green shoots that resemble pine needles. It dies back completely in winter. It flourishes on undisturbed damp ground. Time to act spring, summer, autumn

Organic solution is to remove rhizomes by digging as deeply as possible. The deep roots of established horsetail colonies will re-grow. Regularly removing the shoots and rhizomes as soon as they appear will weaken the plants, but total eradication requires determination over a number of years. Where horsetail is growing in grass, regular close mowing will cause it to die off, although it may persist in borders at the edge of lawns. Black polyethylene or woven sheeting can be used to suppress weeds as can straw, bark chippings, grass clipping and composted organic materials. These can lock up nitrogen as they decompose. Loose materials need to be applied as a substantial layer, at least $\frac{3}{4}$ but these steps are unlikely to remove these weeds within existing planted areas.

Chemical solution is to spray shoots with glyphosate in summer. Tread down the shoots before spraying to bruise and crush them, which will allow the herbicide to enter the plant and be taken down to the roots.

Do check fruit planting to ensure the ground does not have these weeds as once established it is difficult to remove and will spread. Land infested already with these perennial weeds should be avoided for fruit until it is removed. inches deep to prevent weed seedling emergence.



The roots of both can be left out to dry and burned or drowned in a weed bucket (very smelly but works)