

Crowsfoot (*Eleusine indica*)

Introduction

Crowsfoot is a fast growing grassy weed that stands prominently above the normal height of managed turf and can pose a serious trip hazard. There are many common names for this weed including but not limited to crowsfoot, crabgrass and goosegrass. Scientifically this grassy weed of turf is known as 'Eleusine indica'.



Description

'Crowsfoot' is a prostrate or tufted annual grass that can reach 50 cm in height. Stems are whitish, flattened and prostrate branched – often forming mats. Leaves have loose, overlapping, flattened sheaths and shiny green leaf blades up to 30 cm long and 8 mm wide. Ligules are very short. Inflorescences are 2-13 spikelets resembling a zipper radiating from the stem. Spikes are up to 17 cm in length and 5mm in diameter. Crowsfoot has a very strong, dense fibrous root system, which can be hard to pull out.

Germinating crowsfoot seedlings are very distinct when seen growing in the field. The emerging tillers from the centre of the plant are white to silver in colour at the base of the leaves. The ligule is toothed, membranous and divided at the centre. Upon closer inspection, the crowsfoot plant may be smooth and glossy or contain hairs only at the base of the leaf depending on the genotype.

Crowsfoot is naturalised from sub temperate to tropical climates. It is a problematic weed on golf greens, tees, fairways and sports fields that receive high wear and or soil/surface compaction.

Lifecycle

Crowsfoot is an annual grassy weed reproduced by seed. Crowsfoot seeds germinate rapidly, usually within 7 to 14 days under moist conditions, strong light and fluctuating temperatures, on germination, the first leaf, about 1 cm long, tapers very suddenly to a point and may be pressed quite flat on the soil. Later leaves are v-shaped. Its reproduction potential is enormous, with up to 135,000 seeds per crowsfoot plant. Crowsfoot can grow from seedling to a flowering plant in approximately 5 weeks under optimal conditions; under less than ideal conditions, it may be as long as 4 months.