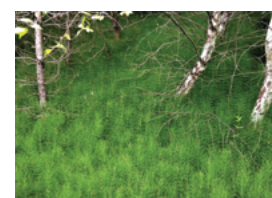


Common Horsetail

(*Equisetum arvense*)



Horsetail is a highly invasive, native herbaceous perennial species that is distributed throughout the UK; commonly found near waterways, in gardens, brownfield development land and agricultural fields.

While there more than 20 varieties, the most frequently encountered in the UK, is Common or Field Horsetail. Horsetail is often misnamed Mare's tail which is actually a different aquatic plant species, *Hippuris vulgaris*.

This relation of the fern interestingly grows two very different stages during each growing season. In the spring, light brown asparagus like stems, 20-50cm tall emerge. These are fertile with a conical spore producing structure at the end of each stem. Once the spores have been released the stems wilt and die back; at which time the green photosynthetic stalks grow. This growth continues through the summer months, recognisable with dense upright fir tree like foliage up to 50-60 cm height. This growth will persist until die back with the first autumn frosts.

The stalks of this plant are formed with segmented stems which break easily if pulled. The rhizomes of this pernicious plant are fast growing and may go down as deep as 2m below the surface. They are weak making them difficult to hand pull successfully. Horsetail may establish from spores, but usually, new growth results from rhizome or stem fragments.

Typical growth phases of species

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dormant Rhizomes		Fertile Stems Spores Released		Existing Plants - Green Foliage Growth New Plants - from Spores and Fragments				Vegetation Dies Back First Autumn Frosts			

Main Problems

While Horsetail is a native plant species and therefore not legislated, many have found it to be the cause of more damage to infrastructure than Japanese Knotweed. It is well known for breaking through tarmac, block paved areas, car parks and destroying landscaped areas; often resulting in thousands of pounds worth of repairs.

With Local Authorities being more aware of the potential damage to new roads and footpaths, there can be difficulty obtaining road adoptions when they are aware of its presence.

Horsetail is a tricky species to get under control. Leaves form around nodal sheaths on hollow jointed stems.

Trying to pull this persistent weed simply results in breaking the stems above ground and this gives no meaningful control.

The plant has a waxy coating which means that it is highly resistant to most herbicides; requiring a specialist to ensure effective eradication.

Common Horsetail Images



Similar Species



Mare's Tail



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