

War on Weeds – Weeds are Everybody's Problem

THE ISSUE: Buckhorn plantain

Buckhorn plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) is a cool season perennial, native to Eurasia and Africa. It invades pastures, turfgrass, alfalfa fields, landscaping, roadsides and other disturbed areas. Its ability to thrive under drought conditions (after it is well established) gives it an advantage over other species, allowing it to crowd out beneficial plants, and compete for needed resources.

Buckhorn plantain seedlings have needle-like leaves that are 1-1.5 inches long. After the first few leaves emerge true leaves begin to develop. True leaves are much broader, have parallel venation and are pale green in color.

Mature leaves are typically 3-10 inches long, 3/4-1 1/2 inches wide, have short hairs and are lance shaped. Flowering stalks reach 12-18 inches tall. Flowers grow in tight clusters at the top of stalks forming an inflorescence. Buckhorn plantain reproduces by seed from May to October. The seeds are about 1/16 of an inch long and are black and shiny.



Photo courtesy of Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Options:

- Prevention – Learn to identify this weed. Always clean equipment especially after mowing areas that have buckhorn plantain that have gone to seed.
- Mechanical – Heavy tillage can be an effective control option. Hand digging can be effective if a significant portion of the tap root is removed. Its robust taproot can be difficult to remove. Mowing is not an effective option, growing points are located close to the ground and easily avoid damage. Mowing can also aid in seed dispersal if seed has been produced.
- Cultural – Establish healthy stands of beneficial vegetation that will compete with weed seedlings. Use grazing management practices that will encourage the growth of beneficial plants.
- Chemical – For control in turfgrass, repeated applications of a three-way herbicide with one or more of the following active ingredients: 2,4-D, MCPP and MCPA can provide control of buckhorn plantain. When trying to control perennial weeds, applying herbicides in the fall often provides the best results. **Always read and follow herbicide label directions!**

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