

## Field Horsetail



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Horsetail, Equisetum Arvense is, in my opinion, public enemy number one. It looks like it belongs in Jurassic Park and, unchecked, spreads like wildfire.

In spring, brown green shoots appear with small cones at the tips that produce spores. (Arghh - millions of 'em) and it grows away from creeping thin brown roots that you can hardly see as they are soil coloured. Digging out these roots is not feasible - they go down into the soil for up to 1.5 metres - yes, 5 feet.

Later the 'leaves' or tails appear. These will die off as autumn turns to winter and the roots sit there waiting for spring. The leaves have a waxy coat, which makes the plant highly resistant to weedkillers.

Crushing the leaves to break up the coating helps weedkiller to penetrate and become absorbed but in large areas it is not so easy to crush all the leaves. However, glyphosate weed killer will have an effect and eventually kill the plant. You will probably need numerous applications over an extended period. Knock it back, it re-grows and you repeat.

I don't think you can clear this in less than one season.

*Without resorting to chemicals you can control/eradicate horsetail by digging/forking through the soil when it is in the right condition: ie not too wet and sticky!*

*Once you have removed as much as possible, any that shoots is easily dealt with. Before it reaches 3 ins/7cm high, hoe off an inch below the surface.*

*Eventually the food supply in the root is exhausted. Let it get bigger than stated and food begins to be stored in the roots again, and round and round you go ad infinitum.*

*Never touch Horsetail with a mechanical cultivator. If you do you will understand why it has been around for 60 million years*

Do NOT compost the roots without making sure that they are DEAD, or they WILL regrow.

We have been advised that Neudorff 613818 Weedfree Plus Concentrated Weedkiller is another herbicide that can be used to treat field horsetail within allotments.