

Bindweed the tennis court destroyer !!

In our opinion Bindweed (and mare's tail) are the most destructive weed that can be found on a tennis court surface. We have seen it destroy one complete corner of a fairly new tarmac court in just 4 months.

The first rule is IF IT IS ESTABLISHED DO NOT PULL IT OUT as this will break the tarmac surface bond and leave a 1" hole in the surface. The problem with this weed is that when it gets a hold it pushes the top surface of the tarmac up thereby breaking the bond of the tarmac. (A tennis court normally has two layers of tarmac. A 45mm base coat and then a 25mm top wearing coat)

It spreads by seed and normally travels along the space between the base layer and wearing layer of tarmac through an extensive horizontal root system, bindweed seed can persist for many years in a typical garden soil. But strategies to curb this botanical trespasser do exist.

The Non Chemical Way

If you want to avoid using herbicides to control it, plan to pull out bindweed for at least a full year but you must pull it out as soon as it appears as if you leave it until it is established pulling it out will break the surface bond of the tarmac. Persistence and dedication are needed to get rid of bindweed; roots left in the tarmac will regenerate in about two weeks so you just have to pull them out as soon as they appear but be careful not to disturb the surface bond.

Any portion of root broken off during the digging process will mean a new Bindweed plant in the spring! However, if you keep a close watch, then stray new plants can normally be pulled out gently by hand - bringing the root out with the plant. Be prepared to pull it all up every three weeks. Bindweed is virtually impossible to fully eradicate by digging the white fleshy roots out, plus you would be destroying the tarmac surface bond.

Chemical Control of Bindweed

Most attempts to kill Bindweed are by using weedkillers - Glyphosate is the best - these fail miserably because of the methods used in spraying. Glyphosate - which is sold under a variety of brand names such as Roundup and Problem Weed Killer etc - needs to be applied to the foliage of the bindweed when it is in active growth. 'Active Growth' is often described as being when the weed is in flower. This is totally unsatisfactory in a tennis court because as it is growing it is destroying the bond of the tarmac so you cannot wait until the bindweed flowers are present

However, as long as the plant is growing strongly - usually at any time at the start of summer - or even in late spring - then The Bindweed can be killed with Glyphosate.

The important thing to remember is that it will probably take two or even three applications throughout the growing season to kill the bindweed off altogether. Once it has been treated with Glyphosate, just leave it alone so that the chemical can then work its way down into the root system of the Bindweed. This can take up to three weeks, although the first effects can normally be seen after a few days or a week. Don't be tempted to pull the wretched thing out at this stage. This will just break up the tarmac surface and leave a hole approximately 1" in diameter. Allow it to die down to ground level - giving it time for the Glyphosate to get down into the roots.