



WEED IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL

STARNOTE 625
June 2009

Dealing with our most common weeds

A weed is **any plant or grass** growing where you don't want it. We have lawn weeds for reasons like mowing too close or scalping, too little or too much fertilizer, too much shade, too much traffic, and insect or disease damage. Prevention of these problems is the best control. Other controls range from pulling by hand to using a wide variety of herbicides. Most lawn weeds can be prevented with a strong maintenance program that follows proper water and fertilizer practices. In flower and shrub beds, a 2-inch layer of mulch will help keep weeds at bay. **If using herbicides, follow package instructions!**

For weed killers, there are two basic groups of post emergent herbicides, **selective** and **nonselective**. Selective products kill weeds listed on the label with little or no effect on other plants. Nonselective products kill weeds listed on the label but will severely injure or kill nearly all other plants as well. Nonselective, foliar (applied by wetting the leaves) products are safe to use on weeds in tree wells and around ornamental shrubs as long as you don't get solutions on leaves of the ornamentals. The most often used nonselective herbicides are *Com-Pleat*[®] and *Round-up*[®]. These glyphosate based products will not move through the soil, but can attack exposed roots. Areas where it is applied can generally be replanted within days after use. As always, follow label instructions exactly when applying any herbicide. Don't apply on a windy day or drift may cause injury of desirable plants.

Understanding the difference in pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides is important. **Pre-emergents** kill germinating seeds and not established plants. They're most effective when applied before weeds begin showing up. **Post-emergents** kill established weeds but don't prevent new ones.

GRASSY WEEDS:

Bermuda is a common turf grass that becomes a nuisance weed by spreading where it isn't wanted. A vigorous perennial that thrives in our climate, it's often mistakenly called crabgrass which is a different kind of weed altogether. Bermuda grass spreads underground by rhizomes and on the surface by fine, easily transported seed. It has a very fine, pointed leaf and spreads rapidly by use of runners.

Controls: Hand weeding is not very effective because the smallest stem or root piece will start a new crop. Glyphosate products like *Com-Pleat*[®] or *Round-up*[®] are highly effective when applied to leaves of actively growing bermuda. Several applications may be needed for complete control. If runners are present in desirable turf, wipe them with a cotton rag soaked in the herbicide. This will avoid any residual turf damage caused by spraying. Use of herbicides while bermuda is dormant (brown) will have no effect.

Crabgrass is a summer annual that spreads rapidly through seed dispersal. A clumping, broad leafed, shallow rooted plant, it will thrive in a thin, under-fed, over watered lawn and will eventually take over if left unchecked.

Controls: Good cultural practices and regular fertilization keep a thick, healthy turf which prevents crabgrass from gaining a foothold in your lawn. Apply a pre-emergent in February to prevent seed germination. If the weed appears, spot treat with a commercial crabgrass killer and dig out any large clumps. Broadleaf weed killers will have little or no effect on crabgrass.

Dallis Grass is a perennial that thrives in summer. Large flat stalks grow from a central crown-shaped ring 4-8 inches across. It spreads through rhizomes and seeds and can be difficult to spot in fescue lawns. It rapidly outpaces normal growth of fescue and shows itself for eradication.

Controls: Pre-emergents are not effective. Spot spray with a commercial crabgrass or grassy weed killer. Watch over spray in hot weather as it may damage other turf grass.

BROADLEAF WEEDS:

Bur Clover is a low-growing, trailing, densely matted, annual weed that reproduces by seed. Its clover-like leaves and yellow blooms will begin to dominate any poorly maintained lawn in early summer. If not controlled, it can crowd out lawn grasses.

Controls: Follow good maintenance and fertilizing practices to keep a strong, thick turf. Spot spray with a commercial, selective product like Bayer All-In-One Weed Killer or *Ortho® Weed-B-Gon®* to eradicate established weeds (plants). Watch over spray in hot weather and wind drift around ornamentals.

Curly Dock is a large, broadleaf perennial with dark green leaves. It sends up a tall, narrow spike of greenish flowers from the center of the plant. Large, individual plants make it easy to spot.

Controls: Hand pull or spade to remove large plants. If many, smaller plants are found, use a selective broadleaf weed killer. As always, watch over spray and wind drift.

Dandelion is a broadleaf perennial with prolific yellow flowers and jagged green leaves. It spreads by seeds and sprouting crowns from the roots. A single taproot will re-grow if broken off at or below ground level. Seed can germinate year-round.

Controls: A thick, healthy turf will restrict this pest. Apply a pre-emergent in early spring and use a selective broadleaf weed killer like Bayer All-In-One for individual plants. Watch over spray in hot weather.

Mallow is an annual that reproduces through seeds. It has large, fan-shaped leaves at the top of a long stalk and flourishes from early spring through fall. Mallow is usually found in thin, poorly maintained lawns.

Controls: Keep a thick, healthy turf. Use a pre-emergent in early spring to stifle seeds. Spot treat individual plants with a broadleaf weed killer.

Oxalis is an aggressive, clover-like perennial which develops a vigorous, spreading root system. Small, yellow flowers form seed pods that can shoot seed up to 6 feet when ripe. This weed can take over if not controlled.

Controls: Apply a pre-emergent in early spring. Spot treat existing plants with a broadleaf weed killer or pull them by hand. Watch over spray in hot weather and drift on windy days.

Purslane is a succulent, low-growing annual that reproduces by seeds. It thrives in hot, dry summers and shows up later than most weeds in bare spots, flower and shrub beds and thin lawn areas.

Controls: A late spring application of pre-emergent herbicides will control infestations. Pull the shallow rooted plants whenever you see them.

Spurge is a low-growing, spreading annual that can live through a mild winter. It forms dense mats of mouse-eared leaves over a central taproot and spreads through heavy seed production. This one is especially noticeable along the edges of lawns, driveways and sidewalks. It also thrives in bare spots and thin turf areas.

Controls: Prevention is the best cure. Keep your lawn thick and healthy. Apply a pre-emergent along lawn edges and pull whenever it appears in walk and driveway creases. Pull large plants carefully so you Don't break the taproot and spot spray small plants with a broadleaf weed killer like Bayer All-In-One..