

## D's Notes

### *Controlling Grassy Sandbur*

Grassy sandbur is the "sticker" plant that looks like a grass. It will often invade thin lawns, especially in dry years. Therefore, the best control for this weed is a thick, healthy lawn. However, if your lawn is thin this spring and grassy sandbur was a problem last year, use a preemergence herbicide before the sandbur comes up. However, not all preemergence herbicides are effective. The three products that can help minimize grassy sandbur are oryzalin, pendimethalin and prodiamine.

Oryzalin is sold under the trade names of Surflan and Weed Impede. It can be used on all warm-season grasses as well as tall fescue. It should not be used on cool-season grasses other than tall fescue such as Kentucky bluegrass. Oryzalin is also sold as a combination product with benefin as Green Light Amaze. As with oryzalin alone, it can be used on all warm-season grasses as well as tall fescue. It should not be used on cool-season grasses other than tall fescue such as Kentucky bluegrass. Apply Amaze or an oryzalin product about April 15 when redbud trees approach full bloom.

Pendimethalin is sold commercially as Pendulum as well as several other names. On the homeowner side, it is sold as Scotts Halts. Pendimethalin is best applied as a split application with the first half applied about April 15 and the second about June 1. Alternatively, make the first application when redbud trees approach full bloom and the second six weeks later.

Prodiamine is sold under the commercial name of Barricade. It is also the active ingredient in a number of homeowner products. It can be used on all of our common lawn grasses. Apply as is done for oryzalin, about April 15 or when redbud trees approach full bloom. Only one application is needed per year.

None of the "weed preventers" will give complete control but each should help. Again, the best control for grassy sandbur is a healthy, thick lawn.

### *Controlling Grassy Weeds in Broadleaf Plants*

Most gardeners are familiar with herbicides that can be used to eliminate broadleaves (i.e., dandelions) from grasses (i.e., lawn). They may not be as familiar with herbicides that can take grasses out of broadleaf plants like shrubs. There are two major weed killer types that are used to kill grassy weeds in broadleaf plants. On the commercial side, the trade names for these products are Fusilade and Poast. Homeowner labeling is more diverse. I have seen Fusilade sold under the names of Ortho "Grass-B-Gon" and Poast is sometimes sold to homeowners under the Poast label but I've seen it more commonly sold as "Bonide Grass Beater," "Fertilome Over the Top II Grass Killer," "Hi-Yield Grass Killer" and "Monterey Grass Getter." There may be other trade names, too. Fortunately, you can identify the product by the common chemical name listed on the label. Fusilade's common chemical name is fluazifop, and Poast's is sethoxydim.

If you decide to use one of these products, read the label carefully. Often, a crop oil must be added to the spray solution for the herbicide to work well. Some grassy weeds are not controlled such as brome grass and sandbur. Mature tall fescue also is not controlled though seedling tall fescue is. Established bermudagrass is knocked back but rarely killed.

### *Setting Up Water Teepees*

If you use water teepees to get your tomatoes off to an early start, you have probably struggled with their tendency to fall over as you try to fill them. An old trick is to use a 5-gallon plastic bucket to make the process easier.

The bucket works much better if it is modified by removing the handle and drilling a hole (use a hole saw bit) in the bottom of the bucket. Place the bucket upside down over the plant you wish to protect and place the water teepee over the bucket.

Now the bucket will support the teepee as it is filled. Once the teepee is filled, the bucket can be removed by sticking your finger into the hole and pulling straight up. You may also want to support the teepee after it is filled by using a metal rod (rebar or an electric fence post) on the inside of the teepee. The metal rod is pushed into the soil to keep the teepee from collapsing from high winds.

### *Seeding Cool-Season Lawns in the Spring*

There are several reasons why the cool-season grasses Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue are better seeded in the fall than in the spring. These include:

- Some of the most serious lawn weeds such as crabgrass and foxtail emerge in the spring. Since they are warm-season weeds, they will compete and often crowd out young, tender Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue plants during the heat of summer.

- The most stressful time of year for cool-season grasses is summer, not winter. Poorly established lawns may die out during the summer due to heat and drought stress.

- A lawn often gets more use during the summer, leading to increased compaction and traffic stress.

If an area needs to be established in the spring, sodding is much more likely to be successful than seeding. Sodding provides stronger, more mature plants that are better able to withstand stress and prevent weed invasion.

### *Henbit and Chickweed in Lawns*

The plant with the little purple flowers that have been showing up in home lawns is called henbit. If you are not sure this is what you have, check the stems. If they are square rather than round, you have henbit. A plant that also is low growing but has round stems and tiny white flowers is chickweed.

Both these plants are winter annuals and start to grow in the fall. They spend the winter as small plants and so most people do not pay much attention to them until they start to flower in the spring. Trying to kill either one at this late stage with a herbicide usually is a waste of time and money. Though plants may be burned back, they will rarely be killed. So what should you do? Remember, these are winter annuals that will die as soon as the weather turns hot. Keep the lawn mowed until nature takes its course.

However, you can do something next fall that will help next spring. Henbit and chickweed usually germinate about mid-October. Spraying with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October to early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants as they are small and relatively easy to control. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F. These herbicides will work at temperatures below 50 degrees but the weeds are killed at a slower rate.

Spot treating will probably be needed in the spring (March) to catch the few plants that germinate late. Use Weed Free Zone, Speed Zone, Weed Out, Weed-B-Gon, Trimec, or one of the special henbit herbicides early in the spring before they have put on much growth.

### *How Low Should You Go*

We often are asked whether it is good to mow lower in the spring. The answer is yes and no. It doesn't hurt to mow lower than normal the first mowing or two. As a matter of fact, it can actually speed green-up by removing old, dead grass and allowing the soil to warm up more quickly. But the mowing height should be raised to normal after the first or second cutting to discourage crabgrass and encourage deep rooting.

Crabgrass seed must have light to germinate, and a high mowing height will help shade the soil. Also, root depth and mowing height are related on upright growing grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass - the higher the height of cut, the deeper the root system. A deeper root system means a more drought-resistant turf.

So, how low should you go on the first cutting? On tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, you can mow as low as 1 to 1½ inches. Be careful you don't go so low that you scalp the turf. After that, raise the mowing height for Kentucky bluegrass to 2 to 3 inches but 3 to 3½ inches for tall fescue.

### *Brown Coloration on Junipers*

Certain eastern redcedar and various other junipers are showing a brownish cast when viewed from a distance. This may be the male flowers. Male flowers are on the tips of the leaves and look somewhat like a cross between a miniature hand grenade and a pinecone. Shaking the branches on dry days will often result in a cloud of pollen being released.

Most junipers are dioecious, meaning they have both male and female plants. About half the junipers (the

males) will have this coloration. The female flowers are much less obvious. If you have clients who are concerned about this brown coloration, have them check the plants to ensure the male flowers are the cause. If they are, assure them that this is normal and will fade with time.

### *Laying Plastic Mulch*

Plastic mulch is sometimes used to start vegetables such as tomatoes and melons earlier than normal. Commercial growers use a machine to lay the mulch, but home gardeners must do this by hand. Following are some tips on how this is done.

1. Fertilize according to soil test. You won't be able to add fertilizer after the plastic is down.
2. Work the soil so that the bed can be easily shaped.
3. Use a garden hoe to form a trench along all edges of the plastic. The soil should be pulled to the outside of the bed. The trench should be formed six inches in from the edge of the plastic and extend along both sides and both ends. The trench should be deep and wide enough to bury six inches of plastic.
4. Lay trickle irrigation tube down the center of the bed. This isn't absolutely necessary but it makes it much easier to water. Overhead watering will hit the plastic and roll off.
5. Lay the plastic down and cover the edges with soil. You need to slit the edge of the plastic where the trickle irrigation tube enters the end of the bed.
6. Plant when the soil temperature reaches the correct temperature for the crop (55 degrees for tomatoes and 60 degrees for melons) at a 2.5-inch depth. Check the temperature at about 11:00 a.m. to get a good average temperature. Check for several days in a row to ensure the temperature is stable. To check out the local temperature go to <http://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soiltemp/> and click on Hodgeman County Station. Then look at the averages for the week at 2" and 4".

### *Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers*

Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work and assume they kill the weed seed. Such is not the case. They do not kill the seed or even keep the seed from germinating but rather kill the young plant after it germinates. Therefore, they do not prevent germination but prevent emergence.

Crabgrass preventers are just that - preventers. With few exceptions they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied before germination. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil.

See more on the Hodgeman County Extension website - <http://www.hodgeman.k-state.edu/>.

### *Ten Rules for Planting Trees*

Before you begin spring landscaping, here are some tips on planting trees.

1. Select the right tree for the site. To avoid serious problems, choose trees that are adapted to your location. Consider whether the tree produces nuisance fruit or if there are disease-resistant varieties available. For example, there are a number of crabapple varieties that are resistant to apple scab and rust diseases. Also consider the mature size of a tree to be sure you have enough room. See <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/index.html> or ask a local nurseryman for suggestions for trees adapted to your area.

2. Keep the tree well watered and in a shady location until planting. When moving the tree, lift it by the root ball or pot and not by the trunk.

See more on the Hodgeman County Extension website - <http://www.hodgeman.k-state.edu/> or come to the Hodgeman County Extension Office.