

LAWN CARE UPDATE

THE FIRST TREATMENT AND GRASSY WEEDS

Doing things “the way it should be” means we don’t follow the pack.

Looking at the temperatures and the calendar, it’s definitely a later, cooler spring, after a longer and snowier than normal winter. With the later than normal change to spring conditions- Some have asked about the Round 1 application timing.

We are on schedule, and heading to your lawn soon. THE OPTIMUM TIME TO BE TREATED-

We apply our first round to target the best time as agreed on by the University of Illinois Extension Office, Illinois Department of Agriculture, manufacturer guidelines, and our own research in your geographical area. We are motivated to do things the way they should be because others may not. We believe this has been a driving force and the reason we are the choice of well informed lawn owners. We do not follow the pack and/or do whatever is most profitable or sales driven, our focus is lawn care the way it should be.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

MANAGING CRABGRASS IN HOME LAWNS

LAWN TALK FACT SHEET # 20 1999
Lawn Care in Northern Illinois

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Crabgrass and other annual grassy weeds are common problems in home lawns that can be treated through both chemical and nonchemical methods. Proper lawn care practices to encourage a dense stand of vigorous grass are the best way to prevent weeds from invading. For example, mowing height can have a big impact; lawns mowed higher (over 2 inches) tend to have less problems with annual grasses such as crabgrass. Close-mowed lawns tend to open up, allowing weeds like crabgrass to invade. Light, frequent watering also favors crabgrass. Crabgrass often invades areas seeded in late spring because of bare soil, frequent watering, and onset of hot weather, ideal for its growth.

Herbicides (weed killers) are also available to manage annual weeds. Preemergence herbicides prevent annual grassy weeds such as crabgrass from emerging. Timing of application is very important, as the weed killer should be applied *before* the crabgrass emerges from the soil. Crabgrass will germinate when soil temperatures are greater than 55 to 60 degrees F for 7-10 consecutive days, and continues until soils reach 95 degrees F. Other annual grasses germinate as soils get warmer than 60 degrees.

For northern Illinois, late April to early May is the suggested time for applying a preemergence crabgrass herbicide. If the spring is very warm, consider late April. In cold, “late” springs, these materials could be put down well into May. Using forsythia blooming as a guide is not dependable. Many preemergence crabgrass herbicides are available in combination with lawn fertilizer at garden supply stores, so the crabgrass prevention and spring fertilization can be done at the same time. Preemergence herbicides include benefin, benefin/trifluralin, bensulide, dithiopyr, oxadiazon, pendimethalin, prodiamine, and siduron. The Illinois Commercial Landscape & Turfgrass Pest Management Handbook and Illinois Homeowners Guide to Pest Management (order through local Extension office) offer the latest information on various weeds and herbicides to control them.

SO WHAT IS THIS BAD LOOKING GRASS?

At this time of year you’re most likely looking at a PERENNIAL grassy weed, a large bladed grass that grows faster than the other finer consistent color and textured grasses. In the spring until about June you’re most likely looking at either Quackgrass or Tall Fescue. (Note: there are other grassy weeds with biannual and perennial life cycles.) Both Quackgrass and Tall Fescue are PERENNIALS, meaning that once they get into a lawn, they come up every year, like the perennial Bluegrass, Rye-grass, and Fine Fescue that make up your cool season turf. In fact, Quackgrass is very easily spread through seeds or just little bits of roots. Because these grasses are cool season perennials in a cool season perennial grass lawn, there are limited options in the applicators tool box. There is no easy way to get rid of them without some short term kill spots or thinning. It takes special methods that are not part of the regular program. Our Tall Fescue Control treatment can selectively kill it, without killing the Bluegrass. The Quackgrass, however, is only controllable by using a post-emergent, non-selective control (similar to Round Up) and then seeding the killed area. Please let us know if you would like to talk about your options. If you would like to go over your grasses and identify what you have, just let us know. Or you can contact the state extension office.



Managing Crabgrass in Home Lawns

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Crabgrass is a light green, weedy grass that can appear in summer.

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Some herbicides may be reapplied for extended control; refer to the label for timing and rates. Core aerifying or dethatching should be done based on label instructions. One of the management problems associated with preemergence herbicides is seeding or overseeding practices. With the exception of a herbicide siduron (Tupersan), preemergence annual grass weed killers will also damage germinating desirable grass seed. Oftentimes siduron is combined with starter fertilizer.

If crabgrass plants are appearing in lawns in mid to late summer, remember that they are annual plants and die as temperatures drop in fall. Postemergence crabgrass herbicides need to be applied when crabgrass plants are very small; typically crabgrass is noticed too late for these to be effective. The suggested strategy to avoid crabgrass next season would be to improve the lawn through cultural practices and consider a preemergence herbicide in spring.