



**Kelly Feehan**

*Extension Educator – Community Environment*

2715 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Columbus, NE 68601

[402-563-4901](tel:402-563-4901)

[environment.unl.edu](mailto:environment.unl.edu)

[water.unl.edu/stormwater](http://water.unl.edu/stormwater)

[platte.unl.edu](http://platte.unl.edu)

Twitter: @KellyFeehan2

## WHY HERBICIDES DON'T WORK ON WEEDS

By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

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Homeowners often turn to Nebraska Extension for answers. One weed related question is why didn't the herbicide I used kill my weeds?

With late September through October being an ideal time to apply herbicides to broadleaf weeds like dandelion, ground ivy, white clover, violet, and bindweed, here are some questions to help determine why an herbicide did not work.

Was the weed correctly identified? Identification is needed to know what type of herbicide to use and at what time of year to apply the product. For example, herbicide applications made to broadleaf weeds during spring and summer are not as effective as late summer or fall applications.

Did the herbicide label list the weed you wanted to control? Herbicides are formulated to control specific weed types, such as grasses or broadleaf weeds, but often not both. Within these types, some herbicides are more effective against specific weeds. For example, products containing triclopyr are more effective against white clover and violets than a straight 2,4-D product.

Was the recommended label rate used? Too low of a rate, as well as too high of rate, may decrease control. Too low of rates could lead to weeds becoming resistant to a specific herbicide class or mode of action (how the product kills a weed).

Was the herbicide applied to the weed when it was small or large? Larger, more mature weeds are more difficult to control than smaller weeds.

Was the temperature during application within the label recommendation? Not only could air temperature affect herbicide effectiveness; too high of temperatures can increase the risk of injury to the lawn or nearby ornamental plants.

Was soil moisture adequate for active weed growth and herbicide uptake? Weeds that are not actively growing will not take up as much herbicide.

Was the herbicide mixed with another type of herbicide? Some products can be mixed together and still work fine. With others, mixing can reduce the effectiveness of one or both of the herbicides.

Did the label recommend two or more applications? If so, was more than one made? Difficult to control weeds often require more than one application.

For postemergence herbicides, those applied to weeds while they are growing, did rain or irrigation wash the herbicide off within a few hours of application?

Did the label recommend the use of an adjuvant or surfactant and if so, was one used? These are sometimes called spreader stickers and they help herbicides adhere to leaves.

For preemergence herbicides, those applied before weed seed germinates and begins growth, was the herbicide watered in within a few days of application? Was it applied too early in the season so it was no longer active when the majority of weed seed germinated? Was it applied too late and weed seed had already germinated?

Positively identifying weeds, selecting the correct herbicide, applying it at the right time of year, and closely reading and following label directions will increase weed control.

Source: Purdue Extension

21 September 13 PSAs (kfeehan2@unl.edu)

It's almost pumpkin harvest time. Pumpkins can rot if harvested before they are mature, or if left in the field too long and exposed to freezing temperatures. Pumpkins are mature once fully colored and the shell is hard, shiny and cannot be punctured with your thumbnail. Once mature, use a sharp knife to cut the fruit from the vine, leaving as long of a stem as possible. Next, cure pumpkins to further harden the shell and heal any surface wounds. Pumpkins are cured by cutting them from the vine and leaving them in the garden for seven to fourteen days if the weather is dry and warm. If the weather is cold or rainy, pumpkins are best cured in a warm shed or garage for about ten days. If pumpkins must be left in the field, straw or a board can be placed beneath the fruit to prevent contact with damp soil leading to fruit rot. Once harvested mature and then cured, pumpkins will keep for 10 weeks or longer.

Dollar spot is a minor disease we often see in late summer on Kentucky bluegrass lawns in need of nitrogen fertilizer. It is an insignificant disease that can be controlled with good lawn care practices rather than fungicides. A fall application of fertilizer often provides as much or better control than a fungicide application. Dollar spot shows up as small, tan spots in Kentucky bluegrass lawns. If you look closely at individual grass blades, an hour glass shaped tan lesion with red margins will be found. Again, adequate nitrogen fertilizer and avoiding evening irrigation are effective ways to manage dollar spot disease. If other lawn diseases are noticed at this time of year, know that fungicide applications are not recommended, nor are they effective, when applied this late in the season. For lawn care, fall is the time for fertilization and control of broadleaf weeds like dandelions; but not the time to control diseases.

If a cluster of leaves on the ends of oak tree branches suddenly turn brown at this time of year, the culprit is usually one of the oak twig girdlers or the oak twig pruner. These are three different insects that feed inside the tip of an oak branch, or chew around a branch tip to lay eggs. This activity girdles the twig and the leaves on the branch end turn brown in late summer. The symptom is called "flagging" due to a cluster of brown leaves appearing in an otherwise green tree. Fortunately, these insects are not much of a problem for healthy, established trees; even though the damage creates concern. Heavily infested mature trees can look a little ragged, but the damage is not a serious tree problem so pesticide control is not recommended, nor is it effective when attempted. If needed on smaller trees, the best way to minimize oak twig girdlers or pruners is to remove and discard affected twigs in late fall or early spring.

Bagworms on evergreen trees, like spruce, are most noticeable on trees now; however, it is too late in the season to apply an insecticide for bagworm control. Any insecticide application made now would be a waste of money and an unnecessary pesticide use as it will have no effect on bagworms. Bagworms are not large, messy webs seen in shade and fruit trees. At this time, evergreen bagworms are about two inch long, tan bags camouflaged with small bits of brown needles and attached to twigs. Bagworms have completed feeding for the season and the larvae pupating, so insecticides will no longer have any effect on the insect. Insecticide control for bagworms is best done next June and July after eggs hatch. For now, bagworms can be hand-picked from small trees and destroyed to help reduce bagworm numbers since they overwinter as eggs inside the bags. To check for bagworms, look very closely at evergreens.

Tunneling by moles increases in fall as moles increase feeding to prepare for winter. Moles have a huge appetite and can eat 70 to 100 percent of their weight daily. They feed on insects while burrowing just below the soil surface where earthworms, crickets, grubs and other insects are abundant. However, applying an insecticide to kill these insects will NOT control moles. Save money and protect beneficial insects and pollinators by not applying insecticides for mole control. If you see a raised mole tunnel, gently tamp it down and water the area to encourage new roots. If a tunnel pops back up in a day or two, this may be an active tunnel leading to a mole den. Tunnels that do not reappear are feeding tunnels used only once by moles. Moles are difficult to control. Setting traps into or over active tunnels and the use of products containing Talpirid or castor oil are the only methods proven to be of some help.