



You know what they say, April showers bring May flowers, weeds, and earthworms. The last two usually aren't part of the rhyme, but this year we will make an exception. Find out what you can do to make sure the May flowers in your lawn aren't unwanted weeds and how to keep earthworms under control.

With the nice temperature, everyone has chomping at the bit to get the preemergence herbicides down. Wait may be a four-letter word, but that doesn't make it a cuss word. If crabgrass does happen to germinate before April 15th, there is a chance that the little seedlings could get hit by frost yet this spring. Don't let air temperatures fool you, it's the soil temperatures that matter. Just because we might have several nice days in a row, doesn't mean the soil temperatures are increasing rapidly. Always check the average soil temperatures at the 4" depth to be sure.

For extended season control, a split application of preemergence herbicides will allow for a longer control window. Aim to put down half the highest recommended application rate on the label now and the other half in 6-8 weeks for season long control of weeds. One application now probably won't last throughout the entire growing season because of the earlier application window.

Preemergence herbicides are designed to prevent seeds from sprouting. The three most common active ingredients in preemergence herbicides are dithiopyr, pendimethalin, or prodiamine. When choosing a product to control crabgrass, look for one of those active ingredients. Once a plant is up and actively growing, not all preemergence herbicides will work. Products containing prodiamine or pendimethalin may control one-leaf crabgrass if watered in immediately following the application, but should be applied before germination for optimum control. Dithiopyr will control crabgrass before tillering, sprouting off-shoots, and can be applied later than the previous products. Be sure to water in the products after application to keep it from degrading in the sun.

Just as you have been busy this spring, the earthworms have also been busy. The activity of earthworms often creates a rough and bumpy lawn surface that can be both annoying and dangerous. The small castings left on the soil surface by earthworms are only one factor that contributes to lawn bumpiness. Earthworms are valuable to the overall health of the lawn. Their activity improves the turf increasing air and water movement in the soil and they help decompose organic matter and alleviate compaction.

There are no pesticides labeled for the control of earthworms. Although some pesticides and fertilizers are known to have an impact on earthworms, none can be recommended as controls. Today's pesticides have relatively little impact on earthworm populations, in part because of the registration process that examines adverse environmental effects such as mortality to beneficial, non-target organisms like earthworms.

Various lawn care practices can help reduce the problem of a bumpy lawn. Bumpiness in sparse, thin lawns will be less noticeable if a healthy thick turf is reestablished through reseeding with a species and variety suited to the site. Proper fertilization, mowing and irrigation of the site can also help. Mechanical means to reduce bumpiness will be necessary to eliminate existing roughness. Core aerifying, power raking and verticutting are all mechanical processes that will break down some of the bumps in the lawn. Roughness accumulates over several years and it should be gradually removed instead of all at once. Using a heavy roller can cause some longer-term issues. Rolling may remove some roughness, it also damages the turf by compacting the soil. Compacted soil reduces turfgrass vigor and eventually leads to a thinner lawn. Although rough, bumpy lawns and earthworms on the sidewalk are annoying, don't let it dampen your spirits.

Don't let weeds and worms get you down... there are actions that we can take to help minimize their effects on the landscape. With a little patience we can get some control and have a nice looking lawn too.

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