Yard and Garden – 08-08-2015- Ted Griess/ Extension Horticulture Assistant

Early this spring I noticed that areas of the lawn in our backyard had winterkilled. Although not the ideal time to seed a new lawn, in late March I over-seeded the barren areas. With a prolonged cool and wet spring, the grass seed successfully germinated, and the new turf established itself well before hot weather arrived. I currently have a good stand of grass in those seeded areas, but I also have an assortment of undesirable weeds scattered throughout, mostly crabgrass and dandelions.

I avoided using any pre-emergent or post-emergent herbicides in those newly seeded areas because I did not want the herbicides to jeopardize the success of the grass seed germinating or prevent the new turf from becoming established.

With nearly three months of growing weather ahead of us, I'm allowing the weeds to grow. One might ask, "Why not kill the weeds now?"

Here is my reasoning. First, I realize there are basically two kinds of weeds: annuals and perennials. Annual weeds grow from seed each year and live for only one growing season. Perennial weeds come back each season from their roots.

Crabgrass is a prime example of an annual grassy weed. Crabgrass seeds germinate in the spring, grow for the season and die when frost arrives. Crabgrass is easy to control in early spring by applying a pre-emergent herbicide. The pre-emergent herbicide kills the germinating crabgrass seedling before it has a chance to become established. As mentioned earlier, I did not use a pre-emergence on the newly seeded areas; thus, I currently have crabgrass growing in these areas.

I could apply a post-emergent herbicide such as Drive®. This particular post-emergent herbicide is selective. When applied according to directions, Drive® is designed to kill the crabgrass but not harm the bluegrass.

I realize any crabgrass growing in my lawn will die when the first frost arrives in autumn. I'm hopeful that these areas of newly seeded bluegrass turf will survive next winter. If so, when spring arrives, I assuredly will apply a pre-emergent herbicide and say goodbye to crabgrass.

"What about the dandelions growing in my new turf?" you ask. Dandelions are perennial, broadleaf weeds (non-grassy). A post emergent herbicide that contains

the chemical 2 4-D, or MCPP, or Dicamba, or MCPA would normally kill dandelions, but since the weather will likely be hot for the next four to eight weeks, these herbicides should not be applied. Herbicides of this type should not be used when outdoor temperatures exceed 70°F. These chemicals are highly volatile, vaporizing easily in high temperatures. Fumes from these herbicides can cause unnecessary damage to other desirable plants. Dandelions, along with other perennial broadleaf weeds, are best controlled in the late summer or early fall. When perennial weeds are preparing for dormancy in the fall, they are channeling all their energies to their roots. Dicamba, 2 4-D or any of the other chemicals named above applied in the fall will be absorbed by the weed and translocated to its roots. Silently the herbicide kills the dandelion during the winter months.

As I began this article, presently I have a good stand of grass in my newly seeded areas, but I also have crabgrass and dandelions scattered throughout. For now, to try to keep these weeds at bay, I will make sure the lawn receives adequate water when needed, and I will routinely continue to mow the turf three inches high, a practice designed to hinder successful weed growth.