

Yard and Garden – 10-10-2015a- Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

Although Halloween is only three weeks away, it's time to treat—the lawn that is. Allow me to set the stage. When spring of 2015 arrived, I noticed, much to my chagrin, large areas within our backyard lawn that had winter-killed. Even knowing that bluegrass stools out and spreads, I was certain these barren areas were too large for them to fill in naturally. My recourse was immediately to overseed the areas and hope for a prolonged, cool, wet spring. Such was the case. The over-seeded areas filled in nicely with new grass; however, an assortment of broad leaf weeds, unfortunately, also took up residence. I avoided using herbicides so as not to jeopardize the health of the tender new grass. Now that October has arrived, it's time to treat for weeds.

First, I want to emphasize that the best way to minimize weed growth is to maintain a healthy lawn. This is accomplished through good cultural practices. Throughout this past growing season, I carefully fertilized, watered and mowed; however, I still ended up with too many weeds. I now have dandelions, white clover and a few wild violets scattered throughout the lawn. All three weeds, are classified as perennial broadleaf weeds. I must eradicate them now, or they will surely be back next year.

Herbicide control of these perennial broadleaf weeds is most successful during the fall. One might ask, “Why is fall treatment better than spring?” In autumn, perennial broadleaf weeds are preparing for winter. The plant's energy reserves are moving from the leaves down to the roots. If herbicides are properly applied in the fall, the toxins will translocate to the roots of the weeds and will result in death.

Three-way herbicides (*2,4D* + *MCPP* + *Dicamba*) are most effective. By applying multiple active ingredients, a wider range of broadleaf weeds can be controlled. This type of herbicide is said to be *selective* — meaning it will destroy broadleaf weeds but not harm the turfgrass. To ensure proper control and safety, always read, understand and follow all herbicide label directions. To guarantee better success when applying herbicides, include the following:



- Spot apply herbicides when only a few weeds are present.
- Always apply herbicides on a calm, clear day when air temperatures are between 50° F and 75° F.
- Herbicide control is less effective when weeds are treated under low soil moisture. It is good to water the lawn thoroughly the day before treatment.
- If it rains within 24 hours of herbicide application and results are not obvious after ten days, it may be necessary to reapply.
- Avoid applying herbicides over new turfgrass seedlings until the grass has been mowed at least 3 times.
- Wait to apply an herbicide to newly sodded areas for 4 to 6 weeks.

- Avoid mowing treated areas for at least 2 days before and after the treatment.

In addition to treating perennial, broadleaf weeds, autumn is also the ideal time to control winter annual broadleaf weeds such as henbit, chickweed, and shepherds-purse. The seeds of these annual broadleaf weeds germinate in the fall, the timing of herbicide application is similar for perennial broadleaf weeds.

For now, ignore summer annual weeds, particularly grasses like crabgrass, goose grass, sandburs or other summer annual broadleaf weeds. As annual plants, these weeds will die with the first freeze. Next spring apply a pre-emergent herbicide at the correct time to prevent the summer annual weed seeds from germinating.

As I began, soon Halloween will be here—a time to treat the kiddos, but for now it's time to treat the weeds. Autumn is the perfect time.