

DANDELION CONTROL AND PREVENTING WEED RESISTANCE

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A recent question asked is if there are herbicides besides 2,4-D to control dandelions. In this case, the person was asking because the smell of 2,4-D makes them nauseous.

While this is a reason to use a different herbicide, an even better reason to alternate the type of herbicide used is to keep weeds from developing resistance to one herbicide or class of herbicides. Resistance can happen when the same product is used repeatedly year after year.

Products containing 2,4-D have long been used by homeowners to control dandelions; but there are other herbicides on the market that work. Read labels and alternate herbicides used.

Herbicides containing 2,4-D, dicamba and MCPP work well on dandelions. Combinations of traditional active ingredients with products containing carfentrazone, triclopyr or fluroxpyr will improve overall weed control.

Check the label for what the active ingredients of a product are rather than only buying by brand name. You could change brand or product name but still have the same active ingredient or herbicide.

Effective control with herbicides not only involves selecting the right herbicide. Timing of application, weather conditions, mixing and application rates, and lawn care practices are all factors affecting weed control.

On timing, herbicide control of broadleaf weeds like dandelions is much more effective in fall than spring. Because of this, other options for dealing with dandelions during spring include leaving dandelions for pollinators, mowing or picking off blossoms to reduce seed production, and removing plants by hand.

While hand-digging is more work than spraying, it can be equally or even more effective than spring applied herbicides. Use a weed puller or soil knife to remove as much of the taproot as possible. Some dandelions may grow back but herbicide control will not be 100 percent effective either.

If herbicides are used during spring, they will be most effective if applied in late spring just after plants have flowered. Herbicides applied prior to flowering are not as effective. Spot treat individual weeds or small areas rather than making a blanket application over the entire lawn.

Be very careful when applying any of these herbicides near ornamentals, shrubs, trees or vegetable gardens. These plants are easily damaged by direct overspray or indirectly by wind drift or volatilization of a herbicide and later drifting.

Tender spring growth of plants is more likely to be damaged than later season growth. Along with herbicide applications being more effective in fall, this is another good reason to use an alternative control method in spring such as hand digging.

And keep in mind the best way to limit weeds like dandelions is to have a healthy, dense turf. Correct fertilization, timely irrigation that moistens the soil to a depth of about six inches, and frequent mowing at a three and one-half inch height are essential to combat weed invasion.

Source: Turf Info Early Spring Dandelion Control Options by Bill Kreuser, UNL Turfgrass Specialist