

## **Weed Infestation- It All Begins with the Rain**

A weed can be defined as any undesired plants that grows where they are not needed. Weeds in the landscape can be unsightly and difficult to manage or control. In the landscape industry, weed control is critical; customers demand weed-free landscapes. Weeds often grow faster and compete with desired plants for nutrients, sunlight, and water. During the rainy season, weeds are more prevalent in the landscape and can be very difficult to control during that time. With excess rain come weeds. Runoff water carries weed seeds from neighboring properties, which subsequently germinate in the landscape. In addition, there are dormant weed seeds lying in the upper surface of the soil waiting for water and other conducive conditions to germinate.

Weed Control- Inarguably, the first step in controlling weeds is accurate identification. Secondly, determine which herbicide to use; some herbicides will work effectively on one set of weeds but does not control others. No one herbicide will kill all weeds. The goal of a good weed control program is to kill the weed before it matures and seeds. The common herbicides on the market are either systemic (get in the plant system) or contact. For instance, systemic herbicides are more effective in controlling perennial than using contact herbicides. Contact herbicides are very effective in controlling annual weeds, however at the same rate, it will kill the desired plant if gets in contact.

There are a wide range of herbicides available on the market that will effectively kill broadleaf weeds. There is a challenge when it is time to control grassy weeds in the lawn. For example, goosegrass is a weed that grows in St. Augustine lawns. The herbicides that kills goosegrass also kills St. Augustine grass. It is important to note that there are many specialized herbicides formulated to control grassy weeds in lawns. Be certain the herbicide is safe to use in your type of turf. Always read the label. Another thing to consider, some weeds are very difficult to control and require repeated applications and may also require combining two or more herbicides. In most cases, a combination of two or more herbicides will be more effective in controlling weeds than using a single ingredient. Only combine herbicides if it is recommended on the label to do so.

Finally, it cannot be overemphasized that applying herbicide is not always the answer. Sometimes weed control simply requires changing practices in the landscape. For example, dollar weed growing in the landscape may suggest that there is a wet area due to an irrigation leak. Fixing the leak will minimize the infestation and consequently reduce the need for using herbicides. Above all, pulling weeds by hand as they emerge is the safest weed control method.

For more information on weed control and other related topic, contact Grantly Ricketts at the UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola at 321-697-3000 or email [gricketts@ufl.edu](mailto:gricketts@ufl.edu).