

How to Prevent Weeds in Your Lawn

The emergence of weeds in the lawn is very unsightly and unwelcome to most homeowners. Unfortunately many homeowners are not willing to spend money buying pre-emergent herbicide that will prevent weeds from popping up in their lawn. Weeds compete with your turf for sunlight, water, and nutrients. Proper lawn care and maintenance is an important factor in preventing weeds from taking over the lawn. Weeds tend to infest lawns that are sparse and poorly managed or totally neglected; this occurs because sunlight freely penetrates the soil surface and helps to promote the germination of weed seeds.

There are two chemical weed control approaches based on application time that can be used to minimize weed infestation; pre-emergence and post-emergence. Pre-emergence herbicides are used to prevent weeds from becoming established while postemergence herbicides control weeds after they have being established. Preemergence chemicals are primarily used to control annual grasses (eg crabgrass, goosegrass and annual blue grass) and certain annual broadleaf weed such as common chickweed and henbit. It is very important to gain basic knowledge and understanding of the target weeds life cycle and temperature requirement for germination to take place. For example annual bluegrass germinates within the temperature range of 55-75 degree F.

In Central Florida there is a narrow window of preemergence application timing. If application is not done within this window, the herbicide will have little or no effect. Application must be done prior to weed emergence. Most winter annual weeds start germination in late fall and growth continues until late spring. In Osceola County, to have proper control of winter weeds, it is best to apply pre-emergence the middle of October through to the middle of November. In addition, at least a ¼ inch of rainfall is required within 7 days of application for the preemergence to be effective. If rainfall is not available the herbicide should be thoroughly watered in with a sprinkler.

Proper turfgrass identification is very important before any herbicide is applied; not all herbicides were made to apply to all turfgrasses. For example, atrazine (preemergence) can be used in centipedegrass and St Augustinegrass but will severely injure bahiagrass. Finally, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions placed on the label. Preemergence herbicides are available at your local hardware stores and commercial landscaping supplies. The following are some common pre-emergence herbicides that are available to homeowners; Barricade, Galaxy, Spectacle, Dimension, Pre-M, and Pendulum.

For more information for this and any other horticulture related topic, contact Grantly Ricketts at the UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3400 or email at gricketts@ufl.edu.