

A Weed Free Lawn!

Weeds are unsightly and undesirable plants that grow where they are not needed. Weeds often grow faster than the desired turf grass, compete with the grass for nutrients, water, and light. If weeds are left uncontrolled, it will result in the deterioration of the lawn over time. Because weeds grow faster than the desired plant, lawns with infested weeds have to be mowed more frequently than lawns with little or no weeds. Weeds tend to infest lawns that are sparse and poorly established; this occurs because sunlight freely penetrates the soil surface and helps to promote the germination of weed seeds.

There are two approaches to have a weed free yard, pre-emergence and post-emergence. Pre-emergence herbicides kill the weeds before they emerge from the soil while post-emergence herbicides kill weeds after they have been established. The pre-emergence approach is the best method because “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound cure.”

In order for homeowners to effectively control the target weeds, they must acquire the basic knowledge and understanding of the temperature requirement to germinate. For example annual bluegrass will germinate when there is temperature range of 55-70 degree F for several consecutive days. Can you remember last winter there were a lot of weeds in your neighbor's yard? I know you hate them; don't let it happen to you. Well, late October is the time to apply pre-emergence commonly called weed preventer.

In Central Florida there is a narrow window to apply pre-emergence herbicide. If application is not done within that window, the herbicide will have little or no effect because the weeds already started growing. Application must be done prior to weed emergence. Most winter annual weeds start germination in fall and growth continues until late spring to early summer. In Central Florida, to have proper control of winter annual weeds, it is best to apply pre-emergence late October into the middle of November. After applying pre-emergence, a ¼ inch of water is required within 7 days of application for the pre-emergence to be effective. In addition, it is important that the landscaper properly identify the turfgrass species; not all herbicides are made for all turfgrasses. For example, atrazine (pre-emergence) should be used in centipede grass and St Augustine grass but it will severely injure bermudagrass and bahiagrass.

Finally, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions placed on the label. Pre-emergence herbicides are available at your local hardware stores and commercial landscaping supplier. The following are some common pre-emergence herbicides that are available to both landscapers and homeowners; Barricade, Galaxy, Spectacle, Dimension, Pre-M, and Pendulum. I wish you will have a weed free life.

For more information on commercial landscaping and other related horticulture topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email gricketts@ufl.edu.