



Control broadleaf weeds in the fall

A landscape that's pleasing to the eye is a goal of many homeowners. While children may enjoy picking dandelions and watching the white fluff swirl in the breeze, homeowners are looking for ways to eliminate their arch enemy.

Having a lawn that looks like a golf course is a goal for many, but dandelions and other broadleaf weeds can put a wrench in those plans. Although relatively easy to control, complete eradication is nearly impossible – and impractical.

Where do these pesky weeds come from? The seeds of broadleaf weeds occur naturally in soils and can persist for three or more decades. They're typically prolific seed producers with some producing thousands of seeds per plant. In addition, bags of poor-quality grass seed may contain unwanted broadleaf weed seeds. Another culprit can be topsoil brought into a landscape.

The best way to minimize weeds is through cultural control practices. However, there are steps some homeowners may be taking by mistake that actually encourages weed growth. Poor management strategies such as mowing too short, improperly timed fertilization and over- or under-watering can encourage weed growth.

The heat of the summer makes it risky to use broadleaf post-emergence herbicides because of the chance of drift, which in turn could damage other desirable plants in the landscape. The cool temperatures of fall make it an ideal time to think about controlling broadleaf weeds in your yard.

In addition to dandelions, plantain and clover are two other broadleaf weeds that are easily controlled with post-emergent herbicides. Unfortunately, other weeds such as ground ivy, thistles and wild violets are harder to control because of their underground stems or root stocks. It may take multiple herbicide applications to get these stubborn weeds under control.

The most common choice is a broad-spectrum herbicide containing multiple active ingredients. Apply early in the day when winds are low. Ideal temperature would be between 50 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Be extremely careful when spraying around elements in the landscape you want to keep. Don't overapply, especially around tree and shrub roots.

Spot spray whenever possible to avoid a blanket spray. Spraying young weeds in the fall is more effective than waiting until spring. Be sure to read and follow all label directions. Also, if you have another mowing on the schedule, wait to mow until about three days past herbicide treatment.

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