

Weekly Column
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Fall Weed Control in the Lawn

Those dandelions – yes the ones that amazed us as children now taunt us as they sprout up in the lawn. October is a great time to take action against dandelions and other broadleaf weeds in the lawn. Control measures can be used to help fight against these weeds, but complete and permanent eradication is not practical or possible. There will be a few weeds in the lawn, but there are practices that can be used to minimize them. There are also chemicals that can be used to control weeds in the lawn. On the other hand, if a lawn is not taken care of, weeds can thrive more easily.

The seeds of broadleaf weeds such as dandelion and clover are naturally found in the soil and can produce for more than 30 years. This is due to the fact that new plants produce many seeds that are easily spread throughout the yard, or from one yard to the next. Topsoil and even bags of poor grass can be bought to a new location already containing broadleaf weed seeds. Once these weeds are noticed, practices can be used to help maintain health and vigor in the lawn.

Mowing the lawn at 2.5 to 3.5 inches is a good practice to reduce weeds. Also, fertilizing in a timely manner and proper irrigation will be beneficial to the lawn. If there are a few patches of weeds in the lawn, it is best to spot spray rather than broadcasting spray across the entire lawn. Broadleaf herbicides that contain 2,4-D, dicamba, and MCPP (mecoprop) are the most effective herbicides for controlling broadleaf weeds. The herbicide should be applied in such a way so that the leaves are wet, but not dripping. Also, broadleaf herbicides should not be applied to very dry soil. Dry soil will reduce the effectiveness of the herbicide.

Fall is a great time to apply broadleaf herbicides because this time of year is when weeds are beginning to store energy and nutrients before the winter. When an herbicide is added to the soil at this time, it travels into the weed along with the

reserves that it is storing from its environment. The weed usually doesn't stand a chance when this happens. If rain falls within 24 hours after herbicide is applied, it is important to re-apply if there are no favorable results within 10 days.

For more information on broadleaf weeds and their control, you can visit the web at <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay9.htm>. A variety of additional lawn care publications can be found on the web at <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/publicat.htm>. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office at 574-533-0554 for more information.

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