

Late winter and early spring weed control**February 23, 2017**

I thought that late winter would feel a bit more like winter, and a little less like early summer – that Punxsutawney Phil is full of it. At any rate, snow and cool to cold temperatures cannot seem to stay in the forecast this year, and it seems it is time to look towards spring. Here are five things to consider.

Prostrate knotweed. Prostrate knotweed is up in hotspots along sidewalks and driveways in Lincoln, and likely not far behind further north and west in Nebraska. It is likely too late for preemergence control in the southeast portion of the state, but there may still be time to the north and west. Scout compacted sites along hardscapes with southern exposure to determine if knotweed is up in your area. Remember that knotweed establishes from a flush of seed germination that ends in late spring. Identify problem areas, and treat with a combination product that contains 2,4-D and either dicamba or triclopyr in early summer.



Prostrate knotweed seedlings.

Other weeds. Winter annual weeds such as annual bluegrass, common chickweed, field madder, or shepherd's purse are germinating, or maturing from germination in fall. Chickweed, field madder, shepherd's purse, etc. will produce seed and die in early summer, so control may not be necessary at this point (though many herbicides are effective). Annual bluegrass may require special attention and control strategies as the season progresses. Perennials such as dandelion and mugwort are also green and happy on campus and can be controlled in spring if necessary.

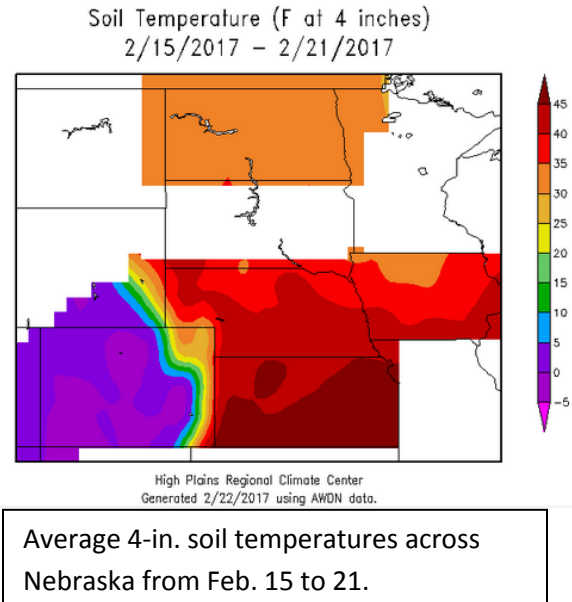


Common chickweed (left), field madder (middle), and shepherd's purse (right).

Are esters or amines better in spring? Synthetic auxin herbicides (2,4-D, dicamba, triclopyr, etc.) are available in either formulation. Though both formulations are effective in fall, ester formulations are more effective during cool temperatures in early spring. Amine formulations are again equally effective as temperatures warm through spring, are less volatile, and are therefore a better option for broadleaf weed control later in spring/summer.

Consider florasulam. Another option for broadleaf weed control during cool temperatures is florasulam (*Defendor* by Dow). Florasulam can be absorbed through foliage or roots to control susceptible weeds, and research also shows that the herbicide will prevent flowering of some broadleaf weeds when applied more than two weeks before spring flowering.

Preemergence crabgrass control. Not yet. It has been warm, but the current 7-day average soil temperature (at a 4-in. depth) is 35-45° F across the state. Crabgrass won't begin germinating until soil temperatures are consistently 55-60° F, and we recommend timing the application after five consecutive days of > 55° F soil temperature at a 1-in. depth. If you monitor growing degree days (GDD), 250-500 GDD (base temperature of 32° F) is another good predictor. Historically, this window opens around April 15. While first germination will likely be sooner than that if warm temperatures indeed return following the cooler-forecasted weekend, you probably don't need to have the first application out much earlier this year because early spring frost will kill early-germinated crabgrass seedlings. I'll keep an eye on each metric, and keep you informed with future Turf iNfos.



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