

Crabgrass explosion

August 8, 2016

Crabgrass and other summer annual grasses are becoming more noticeable. In addition to the maturation of plants that germinated earlier in summer, incidence has also increased from recent rains and warm weather that allowed more seed to germinate where a sufficient herbicide barrier is not present, especially in full sun or thin turfgrass canopies. Areas that have been frequently irrigated (and likely over-irrigated) all summer have even more crabgrass and other summer annual weeds compared to sites where soil was allowed to dry in between irrigation or rain events. This is because frequently moist soils favor seed germination, whatever the species. The question now is: *what should I do?*



Figure 1. A lawn heavily infested with crabgrass where postemergence control may not be practical.

In mid-July, I asked you to consider if postemergence control of sparse summer annual weeds was necessary. Today, I'd like you to make the same consideration taking three things into account: 1) how much crabgrass cover do you have, 2) are you willing to make multiple herbicide applications to control mature plants (and are you willing to risk injuring desirable turf), and 3) do you plan to use a preemergence herbicide program next year?

If you have substantial crabgrass cover (let's say, more than 20% in a given area) (Figure 1), I'd skip attempting postemergence control this year. Not only will you have a tough time with control, but there may not be much vegetation left after you kill the crabgrass. Let the first frost kill your crabgrass for you, overseed and fertilize this fall, and plan for preemergence control next year. If you have only sparse crabgrass cover, you have options. If the present crabgrass isn't disrupting the utility of your turf and you plan to use a preemergence herbicide program next year, skip attempting postemergence control right now. But if you normally don't make preemergence herbicide applications, controlling crabgrass before seed shattering this year may reduce the size of the seedbank for coming years. If you encourage turf health, irrigate appropriately, and persistently employ this postemergence herbicide strategy, you may be able to keep summer annuals at bay without a preemergence herbicide. Maybe.

If you decide to attempt control, **carefully select an active ingredient from Table 1 on the following page – consider efficacy and turfgrass safety.** Rates and application schedule will vary depending on desirable species and crabgrass maturity (Figure 2), so be sure to check product labels. Herbicides will be more effective if crabgrass is not under stress from drought, mowing, etc. Products for postemergence crabgrass control are generally less injurious to desirable species if applied at temperatures <85F – there are opportunities in the 10-day forecast.

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Active Ingredient	Example Trade Name(s)	Turfgrass Safety [†]	Stage when Effective	Recommended Adjuvant	Notes
Fenoxaprop	Acclaim Extra Bayer Advanced Crabgrass Killer for Lawns	Fine Fescues Kentucky bluegrass Perennial ryegrass Tall fescue Zoysiagrass	Up to 5 tillers	Nonionic surfactant <i>(Bayer Advanced Crabgrass Killer for Lawns is a ready-to-use product)</i>	May injure creeping bentgrass [†] ; rates vary depending on crabgrass developmental stage
Fluazifop	Fusilade II Ornamec	Tall fescue Zoysiagrass	2 to 8 inches tall; before tillering/seed head production	Nonionic surfactant	Ornamec may be used in residential lawns
Mesotrione	Tenacity	Buffalograss Fine fescue Kentucky bluegrass Perennial ryegrass Tall fescue	<4 tillers	Nonionic surfactant	Apply before or at seeding, or >4 weeks after seedling emergence
Quinclorac	Drive XLR8 Quinclorac 75DF Quinclorac 1.5L	Safe on most species with proper rate	<2 or >4 tillers	Crop oil concentrate or methylated seed oil	May injure creeping bentgrass [†] and fine fescue
Sethoxydim	Segment	Fine fescues	Before well-tillered	-	Only for use in fine fescues
Topramezone	Pylex	Fine fescues Kentucky bluegrass Perennial ryegrass Tall fescue	<4 tillers	Crop oil concentrate or methylated seed oil	Apply before or at seeding, or >4 weeks after seeding; creeping bentgrass [†] is marginally tolerant

[†]There are currently no registered products for postemergence crabgrass control in creeping bentgrass putting greens.



Figure 2. Different levels of crabgrass maturity (*left: 2 tillers, middle: 4 tillers, and right: 7 tillers*).

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