



Spring Lawn Weed Management Tips

March 8, 2012

Since it appears that our mild winter is mostly over and spring is rolling in, I thought it might be a good idea to cover some lawn tips. Specifically I want to talk about preemergent herbicides and their benefit in a lawn weed management plan.

Preemergent herbicides are applied to lawns prior to seed germination. This group of herbicides controls weeds during the weed seed germination process but do not actually prevent weed seed germination. When weeds are seen in the lawn, it is too late to apply a preemergence herbicide. When applied in the early spring, these herbicides provide season-long control of our typical summer annual weeds such as crabgrass, goosegrass, and sandbur. For spring applications of preemergent herbicides to be most beneficial, they need to be applied prior to soil temperatures reaching 55° F. From observing the data from our Danielsville UGA weather station recently, our window of opportunity for achieving this goal is very limited.

Preemergent herbicides are only recommended for turfgrasses that have been established for at least one year. Newly seeded, sprigged, or sodded lawns can be severely injured with use of preemergent herbicides.

One benefit of preemergent herbicides is they are often found in granular as well as liquid formulations. Because of this, granular preemergent herbicides are often combined with granular fertilizers and sold as “weed and feed” products. I would propose caution using preemergents in this way mainly because the application timing for herbicides might not match application timing for fertilizer. These products typically utilize a nitrogen fertilizer, which should not be applied to Bermuda, centipede, or zoysia turfgrasses until closer to summer. A good rule is that nitrogen fertilizer should not be applied until soil temperatures are above 65° F, which would be much too late for summer annual weed prevention.

Some common names of preemergent chemicals and common names are atrazine (Bonus S), benefin (Balan), oryzalin (Surflan), and pendimethalin (Halts). For any of these herbicides, you should read and follow the label directions. Some preemergent herbicides can be damaging to ornamental plants so you should contact the Extension office if you’re concerned about this possible risk.

Fighting the battle of lawn weeds can be made easier if you use all of the weapons at your disposal, and preemergent herbicides are one weapon you should always keep in your arsenal. Specific recommendations can be made by contacting the Extension office.