

Plant to control lawn weeds

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To gardeners, public enemy number one would be a suitable title for all lawn weeds. From spring till fall, most lawns become battlefields, as gardeners try to outwit and outmanoeuvre their weed problems. By planning strategies ahead of time, most lawn weeds can be kept well under control.

The first thing to do is to create an environment which encourages growth of turf grasses. A dense cover of the desired kind of turf grass will go a long way in preventing establishment of young weeds. This objective can only be attained by following a good lawn maintenance program. This program should include the selection of an adapted grass, mowing at a height of 1½ to 2 inches, watering when necessary, trimming trees if there is too much shade and improvement of drainage in wet areas. There are many books and provincial government pamphlets which provide information about these requirements.

The two most important factors in establishing a good turf are: first, the use of the right fertilizers to provide the nutrients required for growth and secondly, mowing at a setting which leaves enough leaf surface so turf grass can develop a good root system.

The herbicide, 2,4-D is used most often by gardeners to control broadleaf weeds in lawns. Dandelions, plantain and several common lawn weeds can be killed by using a spray application of one ounce of 2,4-D acid in four gallons of water on approximately 2,500 square feet of lawn. The quantity of 2,4-D acid in the products sold varies too much to use any other way of expressing the rate. Most labels will give the amount of product to use to apply the rate given above.

Herbicides such as 2,4-D and related compounds kill weeds by disturbing the growth pattern of susceptible weeds. The best time to spray, therefore, is the early part of the season—late May and June—and again in September when the weeds are growing rapidly. In established lawns, the fall application is most successful. When weeds are killed in September, very few weed seeds will germinate in the lawn that fall. The lawn grasses, however, will resume growth and tend to fill in the space formerly occupied by the weeds.

Several companies have products on the market which are mixtures of 2,4-D with mecoprop, dicamba or dichlorprop. Some are three-way mixtures. These will control chickweed, clover and many hard-to-kill lawn weeds.

Crabgrass can be controlled to some extent by controlling mowing height, as crabgrass seedlings will not survive if shaded by the taller grass, and by watering lawns thoroughly through July and August to encourage the growth of lawn grasses. Herbicides which can be used for crabgrass control must be applied early in the growing season before the weed seeds start to germinate.



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