

Spring Lawn Weeds

Orchardgrass

Orchardgrass is a common weed, especially in tall fescue lawns. Unfortunately, orchardgrass is lighter green and faster growing than tall fescue, so it is very visible. Homeowners often complain of the light green tufts of grass wherever this weed has become established. Even worse, there are no herbicides that will kill the orchardgrass without also killing your turfgrass. Fortunately, orchardgrass is a bunch grass and does not spread.

Buying good grass seed is the first line of defense against this weed as it often comes as a contaminate in grass seed. Orchardgrass is a pasture grass and therefore is not found in the "weed seed" portion of the seed label. Rather, orchardgrass will be listed as "other crop seed." Try to buy grass seed that has 0.0% "other crop seed."

Control options are few and painful. Hand pulling or digging out clumps is one option. For chemical control, use glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall Weed and Grass Killer, Klearaway Systemic Weed and Grass Killer and others) to spot spray orchardgrass clumps. Any lawn grasses you hit will be killed, so keep the spots sprayed as small as possible. Wait until the spots have turned brown and then cut out the clumps and replace with a small piece of sod. Large numbers of orchardgrass clumps may mean it is more practical to kill the entire lawn and start over. This should be done in the fall rather than now.

For information on identification of orchardgrass, including images, go to:
http://kswildflower.org/grass_details.php?grassID=15

Wild Violets

Another difficult weed to control in lawns is the wild violet. Even combination products that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba such as Trimec, Weed-Out and most formulations of Weed-B-Gon do not do a good job. Products with triclopyr give much better control though more than one treatment will likely be needed. A couple of products that contain triclopyr on the homeowner side are Turflon Ester and Weed-B-Gon Chickweed, Clover & Oxalis. (Note: There are several formulations of Weed-B-Gon but only Weed-B-Gon Chickweed, Clover & Oxalis contains triclopyr.)

Both products listed above are labeled for tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. Do not use products containing triclopyr on bermudagrass as severe injury will occur. Weed-B-Gon Chickweed Clover & Oxalis is labeled for buffalograss and zoysia (Turflon Ester is not) but lawns will likely show some temporary browning after application. Spray only on calm days and when temperatures are below 90 degrees to avoid damage to nearby plants.

Henbit and Chickweed

The plant with the little purple flowers that have been showing up in home lawns is called henbit. If you are not sure this is what you have, check the stems. If they are square rather than

round, you have henbit. A plant that also is low growing but has round stems and tiny white flowers is chickweed.

Both these plants are winter annuals and start to grow in the fall. Trying to kill either one at this late stage with a herbicide usually is a waste of time and money. Though plants may be burned back, they will rarely be killed. As winter annuals, both weeds will die as soon as the weather gets hot. Continue to mow and wait until this fall to apply chemicals to control both weeds.

Henbit and chickweed usually germinate about mid-October. Spraying with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October to early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants, as they are small and relatively easy to control. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F. These herbicides will work at temperatures below 50 degrees but the weeds are killed at a slower rate. You may also use a preemergent herbicide for lawns in late September as long as have not recently put down grass seed. Spraying with the postemergence herbicides mentioned earlier will also catch dandelions which the preemergent herbicides will miss.