

Act Now to Control Summer Lawn Weeds

I've mentioned several times over the years that the trouble with pre-emergence herbicides is that we forget to use them until it's too late. Although we will be teased by sporadic warming trends, cold snaps send us back indoors. Don't get too comfortable inside waiting for spring because if you plan on getting ahead of annual summer lawn weeds like crabgrass, it's time to take action.

Pre-emergence means before the weed seeds germinate. For our area of Georgia the major dates for applying these herbicides is early to mid March. We really need to get these out by March 20. And remember that I'm only talking about summer annual weeds. If you want to prevent winter annual weeds like henbit then you'll have to wait until fall.

The next question is probably what product to buy. Oryzalin and benefin are probably the two most common chemical names for preemergent control of crabgrass. Those are chemical names, not trade names so you may not see them in big letters on the front of the package. You will find these names in the small square box where the active ingredients are listed. Examples of trade names for oryzalin and benefin are Surflan and Balan respectively. There are other trade names for these chemicals so read the package carefully. Another chemical name for this purpose is pendimethalin. An example of this is Halts.

These three chemicals that I have mentioned are all labeled for our most common turf grasses such as bermudagrass, tall fescue, and centipede.

There are a few cautions with these products that you need to be aware of. If you have a newly sprigged lawn or if it just was seeded this past fall, you should not use these products this spring. Grasses need to be well established so as not to cause added stress.

Finally, know the size of your lawn. Directions for amounts to be applied will be given in pounds of product per 1,000 square feet. Also, use a spreader that is calibrated so you know how much you are putting out. Often you will find directions on the bag for specific spreaders so that you can set your spreader gate using the number scale. This makes life a lot easier than calibrating on your own.

Sometimes these products are found in mixture with fertilizers we refer to as weed and feed. Pay attention to the dates I mentioned earlier and plan to apply during these times. Most grasses, especially centipede, do not like to be disturbed during green up. Centipede should not be fertilized until it is fully green.

As with all pesticide remember to read and follow all label directions.