

## Late Season annual Bluegrass Control in Residential Turfgrass

Annual bluegrass (*Poa annua* L.) is a troublesome winter annual weed in residential turf. Compared to most turfgrasses, annual bluegrass has a lighter green color, coarser leaf texture, and produces unsightly seedheads.

Annual bluegrass seed germinates throughout the late-summer and early-fall once soil temperatures drop below 70° F. Seedlings grow and mature in fall, overwinter in a vegetative state, and produce seed in spring. A second germination can occur in late-winter as soil temperatures rise and the days become longer. Annual bluegrass is a prolific seed producer and individual plants may produce hundreds of viable seed, even when closely mowed. Annual bluegrass flowers over several months in spring and produces seed that may remain dormant in soil for years before germinating. Annual bluegrass often dies from summer stresses but may survive in protected sites that receive irrigation. Controlling annual bluegrass in mid- to late-spring in residential lawns can be difficult.

Often homeowners want to spray over the top of dormant turf grasses with glyphosate (Roundup) to kill unwanted winter weeds like annual bluegrass. Use caution, however. You can get away with this practice if you don't wait too long. After mid-February, I would not do this. Often herbicide moves down into the canopy where it can come in contact with stolons near the ground. Even though you don't see green leaves, these stolons can and are often greening up. Contact with stolons from glyphosate will injure bermudagrass. It is too late now for spraying with glyphosate as I have already noticed some bermudagrass leave emerging.

If the annual bluegrass is bad enough, there are a few options, but these are expensive and available through professional lawn care operators and cannot be used on centipede or St. Augustine grass. For centipede or St. Augustine turf owners, there is atrazine that can help, but large annual bluegrass is difficult to control.

So, what options can we resort to if we want to do something about this pesky weed? One option is to do nothing. The annual bluegrass is a winter annual and will die out during hot weather. Think about fall pre-emergence herbicides this fall. Also, there are cultural practices that encourage healthy turf such as deep infrequent irrigation that encourage turf grass root development. Annual bluegrass really likes compacted soils so core aeration can be very helpful. Core aeration should be done during the active growth period of the turfgrass.