

## **Control Winter Weeds in October!**

Each year around February we receive numerous calls about weeds. These weeds are winter annuals that emerged in the fall and grown to mature size and have become a problem. Weeds are harder to control when they are mature.

Many of these problem weeds can be controlled with a pre-emergence herbicide application. Pre-emergence herbicides should be applied in early October or when night temperatures reach 55-60 degrees.

Winter annuals begin sprouting from seeds in the fall and grow gradually throughout the winter. They complete their life cycle in the spring and die off. Many go unnoticed for the first couple of months.

Some of the common problem winter weeds are Annual Bluegrass, Carolina Geranium, Chickweed, Thistles, Cudweeds, and the “painful to the foot”, Lawn Burweed. If I were to thumb through my Color Atlas of Turfgrass Weeds, I am sure I would recall some more.

Atrazine provides pre-emergence control for most of the weeds listed above and it is fairly inexpensive. Atrazine will form a thin layer on the soil surface that will kill many weed seeds as soon as they germinate.

Another advantage of Atrazine is that it will provide some control of some summer annuals that are currently a problem in lawns. One weed that is hard to control that is a perennial, which means it grows all year round, is Florida Betony.

Florida Betony is also called “Rattlesnake Weed” because it has a tuber resembling a rattlesnake rattle. This weed usually has a growth flush in October and Atrazine applied during this time will help control this hard to control weed.

Proper lawn maintenance is the best defense to prevent weeds. A properly maintained turf prevents many weed seeds from germinating and leaves little opportunity for weeds to invade.

Thinning lawn areas are where most weeds are first noticed. Soil testing is beneficial to let you know what nutrients your grass needs to maintain health. Proper watering and cutting height are also very important.

Pre-emergence herbicides will not prevent all weeds from germinating. Some will escape but many more will be eliminated before you ever see them. For weeds that do escape, herbicide applications when they are young are much more effective. Use all herbicides according to the label.

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