

PREVENTING WEEDS IN FLOWER BEDS

Often mulch does a good enough job in perennial flower beds to prevent weeds but sometimes the mulch needs a little help. In annual beds, judicious hoeing will keep weeds down until the foliage forms a canopy that prevents weed germination. However, a lack of time may have you considering an easier way than hoeing or pulling weeds that come through mulch. Preemergence herbicides can help though you should not expect 100% control.

Preemergence herbicides do not keep the weed seed from germinating but kill the young plant as it starts to grow. It is necessary to water these products in (1/4 inch of water) so that the young weed root will contact the herbicide. Be aware that most of these products are more effective on grassy weeds such as crabgrass rather than broadleaves such as dandelions or spurge.

These herbicides often have no effect on existing plants, so they must be applied before the weed seed germinates. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil. Microorganisms and natural processes begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. However, all should last long enough so that you get canopy cover before the herbicide wears off. Read the label for information on when to apply the product. Also, be sure the ornamental plants within the bed area are on the label before purchasing the product. See below for products we can use.

Dimension (dithopyr)

- *Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper*
- *Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer*

Treflan (trifluralin)

- *Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules Weed and Grass Preventer*
- *Miracle Gro Garden Weed Preventer*
- *Preen Weed Preventer*

Asparagus Time

Asparagus is one of those vegetables where freshness is incredibly important. If you have never eaten asparagus fresh out of the garden, try it. It may convince you to grow some of your own. For those who have an asparagus patch, the new spears should be appearing soon. The first asparagus that comes through the ground always seems to take a long time to reach harvest size. That is because asparagus growth is temperature dependent. The higher the day and nighttime temperatures, the faster it grows. Also, the longer the spear, the quicker the growth. As the season progresses and spears get longer, the growth rate increases. Harvest asparagus by snapping or cutting. Snapping is quick and easy. Simply bend the stalk near the base until it breaks. Snapped ends dry quickly so refrigerate or use soon after harvest. If you cut asparagus, use a sharp knife to detach the spears slightly below ground level. This base is woodier than snapped asparagus, so it doesn't lose water as quickly. Cut off woody ends before cooking. Stop harvesting asparagus when the majority of spears are the diameter of a pencil or smaller.

Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers

Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work. They do not keep the seed from germinating but kill the young germinating plant. Crabgrass preventers are just that – preventers. With few exceptions they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied before germination. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil. Microorganisms and natural processes begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. If some products are applied too early, they may have lost much of their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are fairly ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products. (**Dimension** and **Barricade** last longer. See below.)

For our area of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around April 10th, or a little later. April 1st is a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. Additionally, weather varies from one spring to the next, and with it the timing of crabgrass germination. It is often better to base timing on the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern Redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. A follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later unless you are using **Dimension** or **Barricade**. Using the product '**Amaze**' will require a followup application after 12 weeks. Products that do require a follow-up application after 8 weeks include **pendimethalin (Scotts Halts)** and **Team (Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control)**. **Dimension** and **Barricade** are the only two products that give season-long control of crabgrass from a single application. In fact, they can be applied much earlier than April 15 and still have sufficient residual strength to last the season. **Barricade** can even be applied in the fall for crabgrass control the next season. **Dimension** can be applied as early as March 1. Because of the added flexibility in timing, these products are favorites of lawn care companies who have many customers to service in the spring. Though **Dimension** cannot be applied as early as **Barricade**, it is the best choice if it must be applied later than recommended. It is the exception to the rule that preemergence herbicides do not kill existing weeds. **Dimension** can kill crabgrass as long as it is young (two- to three-leaf stage). **Dimension** is also the best choice if treating a lawn that was planted late last fall. Normally a preemergence herbicide is not recommended unless the lawn has been mowed two to four times. But **Dimension** is kind to young tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass seedlings and some formulations can be applied as early as two weeks after the first sign of germination. However, read the label of the specific product you wish to use to insure that this use is allowed. Lawns established in the fall can be safely treated with **Dimension** the following spring even if they have not been mowed. Note that products containing **Surflan**, **Dimension** and **Barricade** may use the common name instead of the trade name. The common chemical name for **Surflan** is *Oryzalin*, **Dimension** is *dithiopyr* and for **Barricade** is *prodiamine*. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow instructions carefully. We recommend crabgrass preventers be applied before fertilizer so that the grass isn't encouraged to put on too much growth too early. However, it may be difficult to find products that contain preemergents without fertilizer. Those that don't contain fertilizer are listed below.

Pendimethalin

- *Scotts Halts*

Team (Benefin + Trifluralin)

- *Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control*

Dimension

- *Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper*

- *Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer*

- *Green Light Crabgrass Preventer*

Surflan + Balan

- *Amaze*