

## **CONTROL LAWN WEEDS SOON**

Late October to early November is the most effective time to control broadleaf weeds in lawns. Dandelions usually produce a flush of new plants in late September, and the winter annual weeds henbit and chickweed should have germinated in October. These young plants are small and easily controlled with herbicides such as 2,4-D or combination products (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Even established dandelions are more easily controlled now than in the spring because they are actively moving materials from the top portion of the plant to the roots in the fall. Herbicides will translocate to the roots as well and will kill the plant from the roots up. Choose a day that is 60 degrees or higher. The better the weed is growing, the more weed killer will be moved from the leaves to the roots. Cold temperatures will slow or stop this process. Weed Free Zone (also sold under the name of Speed Zone) contains the three active ingredients mentioned above, plus carfentrazone. It will give a quicker response than the other products mentioned especially as temperatures approach 50 degrees.

## ***Why Late Lawn Seedings Often Fail***

We normally recommend that Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue be seeded in September but no later than October 15. Though plantings later than October 15 can be successful, the odds of success diminish as time passes. The problem with late plantings is not that the seed will not come up or that young grass plants are sensitive to cold. Most often, the problem is with rooting. Unless the young grass plants have a fairly extensive root system, the freezing and thawing that takes place during winter heaves plants out of the ground, and they dry out and die. Regardless of when planted, be sure the new lawn is kept watered through the fall. More mature lawns will need less frequent watering but all should go into the winter with moist soil.

## ***Tucking Your Lawnmower in for the Winter***

If you are done mowing for the year, be sure to service your mower before putting it away. Make sure you drain the gas tank of gasoline-powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer. Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy. A few drops of oil squirted inside the spark plug hole (after you remove the spark plug) will help lubricate the cylinder. While you have the spark plug removed, replace it with a new one. If your equipment has a battery, clean the battery terminals, which usually corrode during the season. A wire-bristle brush is a good tool for doing this. The battery can then be removed or connected to a battery monitor that will keep it charged over winter. If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter (a cool basement works best). Now is also an excellent time to sharpen mower blades so they'll be ready next spring.

## ***Hardiness of Cool-Season Vegetables***

Cool-season vegetables vary in cold tolerance, with some able to take colder temperatures than others. Semi-hardy crops can take a light frost but are damaged by temperatures in the mid- to upper-20s. Examples include beets, Chinese cabbage, collards, Irish potatoes, Bibb lettuce, mustard, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and leaf lettuce. Covering these plants when cold weather threatens can help extend the harvest season. Plants termed "hardy" can take lower temperatures but are damaged when the temperature drops to the low 20s. These include cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, carrots, turnips, and kale. Certain root crops can essentially be stored outside even after the leaves have been damaged or killed by frost. Beets, carrots, potatoes and turnips can be mulched and harvested as needed until the soil starts to freeze in late November to December. Growing vegetables in Kansas can be a challenge, but we have an extremely long gardening season. We can harvest from early April (asparagus) to early December. Winter is a good time to plan and prepare for next year's crops.

## ***"Apples" on an Ornamental Shrub?***

We have had a number of reports of misshapen or fuzzy "apples" developing on a thorny shrub in the landscape. This is most likely flowering quince. Flowering quince is grown for its attractive blooms in the spring. Normally fruit does not develop because frosts prevent fruit formation and plants fruit poorly without cross-pollination. Quince fruit are quite hard but are sometimes mixed with other fruit to make jellies and preserves.