

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 most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little later. However, for our area here in Butler County, this week would be more appropriate, particularly with this year's warm spring temperatures. This year, it may be best 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 or Amaze. Amaze needs a follow-up application in 12 weeks, but Dimension and Barricade 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 is usually not applied as early as Barricade, it is the herbicide of 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). 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 Dimension and Barricade may use the common name rather than the trade name. The common chemical name for 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*

Oryzalin- *Green Light Amaze (Oryzalin + Benefin)*

The product 'Amaze' contains Oryzalin and Benefin and gives you 90 days, or about 12 weeks of control. You may want to re-apply this product the last week of June. The benefit to using this over the other products listed is that Oryzalin does a great job of preventing Foxtail and Little Barley, and if you own dogs this can be important to you.

How Low Should You Go?

We often are asked whether it is good to mow lower in the spring. The answer is yes and no. It doesn't hurt to mow lower than normal the first mowing or two. As a matter of fact, it can actually speed green-up by removing old, dead grass and allowing the soil to warm up more quickly. But the mowing height should be raised to normal after the first or second cutting to discourage crabgrass and encourage deep rooting. Crabgrass seed must have light to germinate, and a high mowing height will help shade the soil. Also, root depth and mowing height are related on upright growing grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass — the higher the height of cut, the deeper the root system. A deeper root system means a more drought-resistant turf. So, how low should you go on the first cutting? On tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, you can

mow as low as 1½ inches. Be careful you don't go so low that you scalp the turf. After that, raise the mowing height for Kentucky bluegrass to 2 to 3 inches but 3 to 4 inches for tall fescue.

Organic Sources of Nitrogen Fertilizers

Most of the soil tests we receive for vegetable gardens are high in phosphorus and potassium, leaving nitrogen as the nutrient needed most. However, many of our organic fertilizers contain similar amounts of all three nutrients. So, what can we use that provides more nitrogen than phosphorus and potassium? Following is a short list of such fertilizers.

Blood Meal- 12-0-0, 5-10 lbs. per 100 sq ft., **Cottonseed Meal-** 6-0.4-1.5, 10 lbs. per 100 sq ft **Soybean Meal-** 7-2-1, 8 lbs. per 100 sq ft

Feed stores will often sell these products.