

## **HENBIT AND CHICKWEED IN LAWNS**

The plant with the little purple flowers that have been showing up in home lawns is called henbit. If you are not sure this is what you have, check the stems. If they are square rather than round, you have henbit. A plant that also is low growing but has round stems and tiny white flowers is chickweed. Both these plants are winter annuals and start to grow in the fall. They spend the winter as small plants and so most people do not pay much attention to them until they start to flower in the spring. Trying to kill either one at this late stage with a herbicide usually is a waste of time and money. Though plants may be burned back, they will rarely be killed. So what should you do? Remember, these are winter annuals that will die as soon as the weather turns hot. Keep the lawn mowed until nature takes its course. However, you can do something next fall that will help next spring. Henbit and chickweed usually germinate about mid-October. Spraying with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in late October to early November can go a long way toward eliminating these plants as they are small and relatively easy to control. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F so the young plants are actively growing and will take up the chemical. Spot treating will probably be needed in the spring (March) to catch the few plants that germinate late. Use Weed Free Zone, Speed Zone, Weed Out, Weed-B-Gon, Trimec, or one of the special henbit herbicides early in the spring before they have put on much growth.

## ***Seeding Cool-Season Lawns in the Spring***

There are several reasons Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns are better seeded in the fall than in the spring. These include:

- Some of the most serious lawn weeds such as crabgrass and foxtail emerge in the spring. Since they are warm-season weeds, they will compete and often crowd out young, tender cool-season grasses during the heat of summer.
- The most stressful time of year for cool-season grasses is summer, not winter. Poorly established lawns may die out during the summer due to heat and drought stress.
- A lawn often gets more use during the summer, leading to increased compaction and stress.

If an area needs to be established in the spring, sodding is much more likely to be successful than seeding. Sodding provides strong, mature plants that are better able to withstand stress.

## ***Fertilizing Grapes***

Year of Planting: Apply one-half cup of a 10-10-10 fertilizer per vine as growth begins in the spring. Repeat after one month. Fertilizers should be spread evenly from the trunk out 3 to 5 feet.

Second Year: Apply 1 cup of a 10-10-10 fertilizer per vine as growth begins in the spring. Fertilizers should be spread evenly from the trunk out 3 to 5 feet.

Mature Vines (3 years and older): If the soil test recommends phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 fertilizer at the rate of 2 cups per mature vine. Fertilizers should be spread evenly from the trunk out 3 to 5 feet.

If, however, there are adequate levels of phosphorus and potassium, add 3/4 cup of a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar instead of the 10-10-10. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Fertilizers should be spread evenly from the trunk out 3 to 5 feet.

## ***Fertilizing the Home Orchard***

Fruit trees benefit from fertilization around the bloom period, but the amount needed varies with the age of the tree. Normally, trees primarily need nitrogen, so the recommendations are for a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar. Though meant for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Use the following rates:

Trees 1 to 2 years old, apply one-fourth cup of fertilizer per tree;

Trees 3 to 4 years old, apply one-half cup per tree;

Trees 5 to 10 years old, apply 1 to 2 cups per tree;

Trees more than 10 years old, apply 2 to 3 cups.

You may also use nitrate of soda (16-0-0) but double the rate recommended above. If a soil test calls for phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 but triple the rate. On apple trees, last year's growth should be 8 to 10 inches, cherries should have 10 to 12 inches, and peaches should equal 12 to 15 inches of terminal growth. If less than this, apply the higher rate of fertilizer, and if more, apply the lesser amount. Spread all fertilizer evenly on the ground away from the trunk of the tree and to the outer spread of the branches. Water in the fertilizer.

### ***Blanching Cauliflower***

Gardeners that haven't grown cauliflower before are often surprised that the heads of most varieties are a yellowish color and not the white they expect. The yellowish hue is a reaction to sunlight. In order to have the heads remain white, the developing heads must be covered to protect them from the sun. This is commonly done by pulling several of the outer leaves over the head when the head is the size of a silver dollar. Hold the leaves in place by a clothespin, rubber band, tape or soft twine. Plants need to be checked every few days to make sure the curds of the expanding head don't begin to show. There are some varieties that are self-blanching but watch them to make sure the leaves actually do cover the head. Self-blanching varieties are more likely to "work" in cool weather.

### ***Setting Up Water Teepees***

If you use water teepees to get your tomatoes off to an early start, you have probably struggled with their tendency to fall over as you try to fill them. An old trick is to use a 5-gallon plastic bucket to make the process easier.

The bucket works much better if it is modified by taking the handle off and drilling a hole (use a hole saw bit) in the bottom of the bucket. Place the bucket upside down over the plant you wish to protect and place the water teepee over the bucket.

Now the bucket will support the teepee as it is filled. Once the teepee is filled, the bucket can be removed by sticking your finger into the hole and pulling straight up. You may also want to support the teepee after it is filled by using a metal rod (rebar or an electric fence post) on the inside of the teepee. The metal rod is pushed into the soil to keep the teepee from collapsing from high winds.