

Larry Crouse**Extension Horticulture Agent****Controlling Grassy Sandbur**

Grassy sandbur is the "sticker" plant that looks like a grass. It will often invade thin lawns, especially in dry years. Therefore, the best control for this weed is a thick, healthy lawn. However, if your lawn is thin this spring and grassy sandbur was a problem last year, use a preemergence herbicide before the sandbur comes up. However, not all preemergence herbicides are effective. The three products that can help minimize grassy sandbur are oryzalin, pendimethalin and prodiamine. Oryzalin is sold under the trade names of Surflan and Weed Impede. It can be used on all warm-season grasses as well as tall fescue. It should not be used on cool-season grasses other than tall fescue such as Kentucky bluegrass. Apply oryzalin about April 15 when redbud trees approach full bloom. A second application can be applied July 1 for difficult cases. Pendimethalin is sold commercially as Pendulum as well as several other names. On the homeowner side, it is sold as Scotts Halts. Pendimethalin is best applied as a split application with the first half applied about April 15 and the second about June 1. Alternatively, make the first application when redbud trees approach full bloom and the second six weeks later.

Prodiamine is sold under the commercial name of Barricade. It is also the active ingredient in a number of homeowner products. It can be used on all of our common lawn grasses. Apply as is done for oryzalin, about April 15 or when redbud trees approach full bloom. Only one application is needed per year. None of the "weed preventers" will give complete control but each should help. Quinclorac (Drive) can provide some postemergence control especially if the sandbur is in the seedling stage. Quinclorac is also found in a number of combination products that control both broadleaf weeds and crabgrass such as one of the following.

- Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max + Crabgrass Control
- Bayer All-in-One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer.
- Monterey Crab-E-Rad Plus
- Fertilome Weed Out with Q
- Trimec Crabgrass Plus Lawn Weed Killer
- Bonide Weed Beater Plus Crabgrass & Broadleaf Weed Killer
- Spectracide Weed Stop for Lawns Plus Crabgrass Killer

Again, the best control for grassy sandbur is a healthy, thick lawn. Oryzalin is also sold as a combination product with benefin as Green Light Amaze. As with oryzalin alone, it can be used on all warm-season grasses as well as tall fescue. It should not be used on cool-season grasses other than tall fescue such as Kentucky bluegrass. Apply Amaze about April 15 when redbud trees approach full bloom and again July 1.

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 at first? On tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, you can mow as low as 1 to 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 3½ inches for tall fescue.

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 and assume they kill the weed seed. Such is not the case. They do not kill the seed or even keep the seed from germinating but rather kill the young plant after it germinates. Therefore, they do not prevent germination but prevent emergence. 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. April 15 is normally a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. However, this year, we may want to go a week or two early. For here in southeast Kansas, this week would be appropriate, and for northwest Kansas, mid-April would be best. Even better, 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. Products that do require a follow-up application include pendimethalin (Scotts Halts), oryzalin (Green Light 'Amaze') 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 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). 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 ensure 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 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. I didn't find any products containing Barricade that did not also have a fertilizer. If anyone knows of other products that should be listed, let us know and we will publish them in a later newsletter.

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 + Benefin

- Green Light 'Amaze'