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## **CRABGRASS CONTROL**

This is the time of year when people really notice crabgrass infestations. By far the best way to control crabgrass is to prevent it by maintaining a good, thick lawn. Crabgrass is an annual that must come up from seed each year and the seed must have light in order to germinate. If a lawn is thick enough that sunlight does not reach the soil, the crabgrass will not germinate. Under Kansas conditions it is not easy to maintain such a lawn; so many gardeners do the next best thing and apply a crabgrass preventer in the spring. Crabgrass preventers kill the seed as it germinates. Most do not have any effect on crabgrass that has already come up. If we are too late to apply a preventer, we do have other herbicides that will kill crabgrass after it is up including Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max + Crabgrass Control, Bayer All-in-One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer and Fertilome Weed Out with Crabgrass Killer. Each contains quinclorac, which is a crabgrass herbicide, as well as other active ingredients that control broadleaf weeds. Quinclorac is an excellent crabgrass killer that controls not only crabgrass but also has good activity on foxtail and certain broadleaves such as field bindweed, black medic and clover. However, it does little to nothing to goosegrass. However, quinclorac can harm garden plants if clippings are used as mulch. Clippings should be returned to the lawn or discarded. Even composting will not break down the quinclorac. Fortunately, crabgrass starts declining about the middle of August. This is about the same time that cool- season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass start to come out of their summer doldrums. By the first of September, the crabgrass will be less noticeable. Therefore, a small infestation is best ignored. Remember that crabgrass is a warm-season annual and will be killed by the first frost.

### ***Plants for Late Season Bloom***

Landscapes are often drab this time of year. You can add interest to your home by planting shrubs that flower later in the growing season. Consider one or more of the following.

**Rose of Sharon** (*Hibiscus syriacus*) is a tall shrub that produces single or double flowers. Colors range from white to red, purple or violet, or combinations, depending on the variety.

**Crapemyrtle** (*Lagerstroemia indica*) are dwarf-to-tall shrubs or trees. They are not reliably winter hardy in the northern half of Kansas and often die back to the ground. Here in the southern half of the state we have much better luck with them. Crapemyrtle flowers on new wood, so plants pruned to the ground while dormant in late winter or early spring will bloom later the same year. Flower color varies from white, pink, to purple or deep red on different plants.

**Bluebeard** (*Caryopteris x clandonensis*) is also known as blue-spirea, blue-mist shrub, or caryopteris. It usually is found with blue flowers, but some cultivars have a bluish-violet to violet flower color. Plants are usually cut back in late winter or early spring. Flowers are borne on the current season's growth.

**Sweet Autumn clematis** (*Clematis terniflora*) is a vigorous vine with large masses of small, white flowers that have a wonderful fragrance. Be careful with this one; it can easily outgrow its bounds. It is often a good idea to cut it back to the ground in early spring.

**Davidiana clematis** (*Clematis heracleifolia* var. *Davidiana*) is a bush-type clematis with small but interesting violet-blue flowers. Female plants bear interesting fluffy seed heads into the winter. This clematis needs to be cut back each year to help maintain the shape of the plant.

**The PeeGee hydrangea** (*Hydrangea paniculata* *Grandiflora*) is a somewhat coarse plant that develops large clusters of white flowers. It can be trained into a tree-like form.

### ***Cicada Killer Wasps***

These large (1-1/3- to 1-5/8-inch long) wasps fly slowly above the ground. Cicada killers have a black body with yellow marks across the thorax and abdomen. Wings are reddish-orange.

Although these wasps are huge, they usually ignore people. Males may act aggressively if they are threatened, but are unable to sting. Females can sting, but are so passive that they rarely do. Even if they do sting, the pain is less than that of smaller wasps such as the yellow jacket or paper wasp and is similar to the sting of a sweat bee. The cicada killer is a solitary wasp rather than a social wasp like the yellow jacket. The female nests in burrows in the ground. These burrows are quarter-size in diameter and can go 6 inches straight down and another 6 inches horizontally. Adults normally live 60 to 75 days from mid-July to mid-September and feed on flower nectar and sap. The adult female seeks cicadas on the trunks and lower limbs of trees. She stings her prey, flips it over, straddles it and carries it to her burrow. If she has a tree to climb, she will climb the tree so she can get airborne and fly with cicada back to the nest. If not, she will drag it. She will lay one egg per cicada if the egg is left unfertilized. Unfertilized eggs develop into males only. Fertilized eggs develop into females and are given at least two cicadas. Cicadas are then stuffed into the female's burrow. Each burrow normally has three to four cells with one to two cicadas in each. However, it is possible for one burrow to have 10 to 20 cells. Eggs hatch in two to three days, and larvae begin feeding on paralyzed cicadas. Feeding continues for four to 10 days until only the outer shell of the cicada remains. The larva overwinters inside a silken case. Pupation occurs in the spring. There is one generation per year. Cicada killers are not dangerous, but they can be a nuisance. If you believe control is necessary, treat the burrows after dark to ensure the female wasps are in their nests. The males normally roost on plants near burrow sites. They can be captured with an insect net or knocked out of the air with a tennis racket during the day. Carbaryl (Sevin) or permethrin may be used for control.

### ***Still Time for Salad Garden***

Plant salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard and other greens from mid-August to early September for a fall harvest. Plant slightly deeper than you did in the spring. This will keep the seed slightly cooler though still warm and the soil should retain moisture longer. Water frequently (if needed) until seedlings start to emerge - which should be fast with our warmer soils. Watering heavy soils can sometimes cause a crust to form. This can be prevented by a light sprinkling of peat moss, vermiculite or compost directly over the row. Reduce watering frequency after plants emerge. Plants may need to be protected from hungry rabbits and insects.

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