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LITTLE BARLEY IN LAWNS

We mentioned this weed earlier in the year but it was too early to control it. Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer.

Now is the time to control little barley for next year. The best control for little barley is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions. Overseeding now can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation. However, if you do not plan to overseed, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden and as Amaze by Greenlight. Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Herodium* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide now and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.

Asparagus and Rhubarb in the Autumn Season

Harvest is long past but now is the time asparagus and rhubarb plants build up needed reserves for the next year. Be sure to water during dry weather and keep plants free of weeds. Do not fertilize until mid-March next year. Foliage should be left until all green is gone. It can then be removed or left for the winter to help collect snow.

Harvesting and Roasting Sunflower Seed

Sunflowers are usually ready to be harvested beginning in mid-September and into October. Seed heads can ripen on the plant, but they will need protection from birds. Try covering the heads with a paper sack or cheesecloth once the petals start turning brown. Use a twist tie or rubber band to secure the covering. This will not only help keep birds out but will prevent ripened seeds from dropping out of the head. The ultimate check, of course, is to pull a few seeds to see if they have turned black with white stripes, the typical color. Empty shells usually indicate a lack of pollination earlier in the year. If heads are to remain uncovered, harvest when a few seeds start turning black and white. The flavor will not be good as when seeds are allowed to ripen on the plants, but fewer seeds will be lost. Cut the heads and place in a paper sack. Some people prefer to cut the heads with about a foot of stem attached and hang them upside down in a dry, well-ventilated area. A paper bag or cheesecloth can be placed over the heads to prevent seeds from dropping as they dry. Seeds can be easily removed from dry heads by rubbing gently.

Roasting Seeds

Raw, mature seeds may be prepared at home by covering unshelled seeds with salted water (2quarts of water to 1/4 to 2 cup salt). Bring to a boil and simmer 2 hours, or soak in the salt solution overnight. Drain and dry on absorbent paper. Put sunflower seeds in a shallow pan in a

300-degree F oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Take seeds out of the oven and add 1 teaspoon of melted butter or margarine, or cooking oil per 1 cup of seeds if they are to be eaten immediately. Stir to coat. Put on an absorbent towel. Salt to taste.

Soil pH- What is it and Why Does it Matter?

Have you applied fertilizer, but aren't seeing any results? Soil pH might be the problem. Before we talk about why your plants can't uptake essential nutrients, let's talk about what pH is. Soil pH stands for potential Hydrogen and is measured on a 1-14 scale where 1 is very acidic, 7 is neutral, and 14 is very alkaline. "Building Soils for Better Crops" states that most agronomic crops prefer a soil pH ranging from 6 to 7.5, depending on the crop. Soil pH influences your plants' ability to uptake nutrients. This is important because you might see symptoms of a nutrient deficiency, green veins and yellowing around the leaf, on your plant, but that doesn't mean the nutrients are not in the soil. For example, in Kansas the micronutrient iron is plentiful in soils, yet we see iron chlorosis in plants, especially oak trees. This is because iron is in a soluble form and is easily taken up by oak trees when the soil pH ranges from 5.0 to 6.5, but when the soil pH is above a 7 iron is no longer soluble and the tree can't pick up the iron. Understanding soil pH when applying fertilizers, especially nitrogen, is important too because fertilizer has the potential raise or lower your soils pH. One of the best, and most accurate, ways to determine your soils pH is to send a soil sample to the K-State soil testing lab through your local County Extension office. You can contact the Butler County Extension office by calling (316) 321-9660, Monday through Friday from 8 to 5.