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THE GRAPEVINE

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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 from September to 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. These herbicides will work at temperatures below 50 degrees but the weeds are killed at a slower rate. You may also use a preemergent herbicide for lawns in late September as long as have not recently put down grass seed. Spraying with the post emergence herbicides mentioned earlier will also catch dandelions which the preemergent herbicides will miss. Spot treating will probably be needed in the spring whichever method of control you use but is more likely with the use of preemergent herbicides. 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.

Fertilizing Grapes

Year of Planting: Apply one-half cup of a 10-10-10, 12-12-12 or similar fertilizer per vine as growth begins in the spring. Repeat after one month. Spread fertilizer evenly out 3 to 5 feet. **Second Year:** Apply 1 cup of a 10-10-10, 12-12-12 or similar 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, 12-12-12 or similar 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.

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 recommended 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.

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 with at least 1/4 inch of water.

"Bugs" That Eat Toilet Paper

For those of you that have been stocking-up on the toilet paper during the COVID-19 crisis I have some bad news…there are insects ("bugs") that will actually feed on toilet paper. Some insects actually have an affinity for toilet paper that may be related to the "softness," which makes it easier for the insects to chew on the toilet paper sheets. One of these insects is the silverfish [Order: Zygentoma (Thysanura)], which is grayish-white, segmented, elongated, and approximately 3/4 inches (19 mm) long. Silverfish have two antennae that move back and forth in motion and there are three long tails or bristles protruding from the back of the abdomen. In addition to silverfish, cockroaches, termites, and booklice may occasionally enjoy munching on toilet paper sheets. Silverfish will start feeding on the outer edges of the toilet paper and move inward. Most people keep their stockpile of toilet paper in the basement. However, this is a prime environment for silverfish development and reproduction since, in general, basements are humid and damp. The higher the humidity, the faster silverfish will develop and reproduce. In general, the life cycle (egg to adult) takes three to four months. Toilet paper that is stacked on shelves next to a wall provides a nice "buffet" for silverfish. However, below are ways to protect your toilet paper from silverfish and other "bugs:"

1. Keep all toilet paper in the original packaging.

2. Place toilet paper in PVC tubes similar to the ones used for drainage that will allow you to stack the toilet paper rolls on top of each other. Be sure to seal both ends to exclude silverfish and other "bugs" from getting at the toilet paper.

3. Place toilet paper in a heavy duty plastic garbage container with a tight-sealing lid. In addition, you can place moth balls in the bottom of the container to repel any "bugs."

4. Place toilet paper in heavy duty Tupperware containers with tight-sealing lids. Again, placing moth balls inside may help to repel any "bugs" from munching on the rolls of toilet paper.

5. Place diatomaceous earth (DE) around stacks of toilet paper to create a barrier. However, make sure there are no gaps in the barrier that silverfish or other "bugs" can get through. If a silverfish or even a cockroach tries to cross the DE barrier, their cuticle will be ruptured leading to a loss of water (dehydration)…and they will die!

Well, I hope this article will help everyone to sustain the usefulness of their toilet paper so that when you have to go…you do not find out too late…that a silverfish or other "bug" has enjoyed your toilet paper before you can use it!

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