
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

Volume 27, Issue 2

"Helping Others Grow"

February 2018

Wicked Winter Weeds *By Cathy Bond, SMG member*

Just when you thought you had put your garden to bed and were finished for the 2017 gardening season and are ready to sit back snug and warm on your couch thumbing through the 2018 garden catalogs – up jump those wicked winter weeds! Gardeners are often surprised how quickly these weeds can seemingly pop up overnight in their yards and gardens, being unaware that they have been stealthily growing slowly but steadily all fall and winter long. This time of year all those midwest broadleaf annual winter weeds like dandelion, chickweed, henbit, purple deadnettle, hairy bittercress, wild mustards, prickly lettuce, speedwell, horseweed, cheatgrass and clover and others that you may have missed controlling earlier in the fall will be silently popping up in our lawns and gardens as tiny seedlings. Most winter annual weeds can germinate any time between late summer and early spring, but typically they emerge in the fall, over-winter as small seedlings, and complete their life cycles in the spring. After they flower in spring they go to seed, die and disappear with the summer heat, only to return in fall or winter when new seeds germinate. Left on their own, annual winter weeds with their prolific seed production can quickly become a major problem with crop production, and just plain annoying when they multiply our spring garden chores as they crop up in large numbers in our lawns and garden beds along with the crocus and daffodil.

Herbicides that control winter annual weeds are typically applied in October and November. The best time to apply herbicides in the fall is on days when the morning low is above freezing. The best foliar herbicide activity will occur when you have a few days of warm daytime air temperatures (50's or higher). Once we have had a couple of hard frosts, the weeds may be tougher to control. To prevent germination of the seeds of these winter annuals, apply a pre-emergent herbicide, such as Gallery 75 or herbicides containing Dicamba and/or MCPA or MCPP or combination products (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) in early fall before the weed seeds have germinated. Combination herbicides that contain 2,4-D and Dicamba are more effective than 2,4-D alone). For established weeds the best time to apply herbicides is early spring when the weeds are actively growing but before they go to seed. Even hard to kill dandelions are more easily controlled in fall than in the spring because they are actively moving

materials from top portion of the plant to the roots in the fall. Herbicides will translocate to the roots as well and will kill the plant from the roots up reducing your spring weeding chores. After you have identified the weed you have, check product labels or resource materials to see which herbicides are most effective for that weed or combination of weeds.

Use herbicides with caution around desirable plants that may be damaged. Read label directions and cautions carefully and hopefully you will get on top of those wicked weeds and then you can relax and leaf through those new garden catalogs coming in the mail!



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