

Weed Control

By: Melinda Sperl

How do I control weeds is a question I get asked every single day. There are no easy answers except perseverance but some methods work better than others do. Others are a complete waste of money.

Most weeds are spread by the wind, mulch, soil, birds or over the ground. Using weed barrier under the soil and mulch won't work as weed seeds are spread by wind, birds, animals, etc. Also, weed seeds need sunlight to germinate so covering the soil with mulch will normally discourage most weeds from growing. This is why mulching at least once per year is a very good idea in our area especially in lawns with Bermuda grass growing in the vicinity.

The majority of weed control products sold are for post emergent weeds (Round Up), after they are already grown. Reading the product labels are key though as the majority of them only work when the evening temperatures are over 80 degrees. So, if you are in the habit of applying your Weed-N-Feed by the month regardless of the temperature outside, you may have been surprised when your weeds did not disappear as usual since we had an unseasonably cool spring.

Controlling weed seeds before they germinate is the best method of containment. Using a pre-emergent herbicides in early spring and late fall will kill most weed seeds prior to germination. This will not kill existing weeds so this can discourage those homeowners wanting instant results. Over time though, this will eliminate the need for other weed control measures. Topical, or post emergent, weed treatments (Round Up) are very useful for existing weeds but even if you kill that particular weed, it may have already spread its seeds around the yard. If you apply a pre-emergent herbicides most of the seeds will not germinate the following year. It can be a hard concept to follow but the number one thing I am asked how a professionally landscaped yard is kept weed-free and the secret is pre-emergent herbicides.

Nutgrass is a whole problem in itself. It resembles grass that has an actual nut about a foot underground. If you were to pull it straight out, it is thought to divide like a bulb. Nutgrass (nutsedge) will come through any weed fabric, rock or mulch, so treatment for this has to be specific to the weed, such as SedgeHammer or Image. It may take a couple of weeks to die so try to hold off pulling before so that the chemical can contact the leaf surface and work down to the root. This process can take two weeks and can be unsightly but is well worth the time it takes.

Happy Gardening!

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