

# Gardening Basics

## Controlling Dallisgrass

Dallisgrass (*Paspalum dilatatum*) is a perennial grassy weed found all over Texas, particularly in the eastern areas of the state. It is often misidentified and confused with other grassy weeds such as crabgrass or Johnsongrass.

### Identification

Accurate identification of lawn weeds is essential. The characteristics of Dallisgrass to look for:

- Grows in spreading clumps, with short thick rhizomes, and almost no runners.
- Leaf blades are ½" wide, yellow-green in color, with a prominent mid-rib.
- Distinctive seed heads on 14" to 65" stalks, on drooping spikelets on alternate sides of the stalk, with two rows of egg-shaped seeds along the entire spikelet. The seeds are green to purplish-black.
- Prefers moist, poorly drained soil.

### Best Control Methods

Dallisgrass is challenging to control. There are no selective herbicides to kill Dallisgrass in existing turf. The most effective control methods:

- A healthy, dense lawn minimizes the space available for weeds. Proper mowing height – no more than 1/3 of the length of the grass blades; proper watering rate and frequency – equivalent to 1" per week; and proper fertilization are keys to a healthy lawn.
- Correct any poor drainage issues.
- Hand-pull young Dallisgrass plants before seeds appear. Removing by hand is best done when the soil is moist.
- Use a sharpshooter shovel or weed-digging tool to dig out the entire root clump.
- The application of pre-emergence herbicides labeled for crabgrass control can be effective if applied at the right time of year. Plan to apply pre-emergence herbicides to your lawn when nighttime temperatures are consistently 60-70 degrees F. In North Texas, the application is recommended in March-April and again in early September. Read the product label carefully for application and safety instructions.

### More Drastic Control Methods

A non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate will kill Dallisgrass which has already emerged. Glyphosate will also kill the desirable lawn grass and other plants it encounters. To minimize this risk, apply non-selective herbicides with a sponge-type applicator used for washing dishes, or make a "shield" with a can, 1-liter soda bottle, or milk jug with the bottom cut-off. Set the shield over the weed, and spray the herbicide down inside the shield, taking care not to let the herbicide dribble over the sides. Dig out the root clump after it dies and reseed the grass.

### Sources and Resources

Reynolds, PhD, C., & Elmore, PhD, M. (n.d.). Weeds of Texas Turf. Retrieved from AggieTurf:

<https://aggieturf.tamu.edu/turfgrass-weeds/>

University of Maryland Extension. (2022, May 11). Dallisgrass. Retrieved from University of Maryland Extension:

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/dallisgrass>

**Dallisgrass**  
*Paspalum dilatatum*



Photos: Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org