

Gardening Basics

Using Broadleaf Weed Herbicides

Let's talk about controlling broadleaf weeds in your lawn. There are three types of weeds commonly found in turfgrass in North Texas:

- Broadleaf weeds - henbit, common chickweed, spotted spurge, dandelion, purslane, clover, and many more
- Grassy weeds - crabgrass, dallisgrass, annual bluegrass, rescuegrass
- Sedge - annual sedge, green kyllinga, purple nutsedge, yellow nutsedge

Aggie Horticulture has a terrific webpage with photos of the common weeds found in Texas turfgrass:

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

Options for Managing Weeds in Lawns

The type of herbicide you use to manage weeds in your lawn depends on the time of year and the kind of weed you're trying to control.

- Pre-emergence herbicides are chemical weed control that prevents weed seedlings from becoming established. These must be applied at certain times of the year to treat the weed seeds before they germinate. Using a pre-emergence herbicide is an excellent method for preventing weeds.
- Post-emergence herbicides target visible weeds. You'll want to use this to treat the clover in your yard.
- Non-selective herbicides are chemical herbicides that kill any vegetation they contact. There are limited applications for using a non-selective herbicide to control, usually when you want to kill the weeds and the turf in an area and start over.



Henbit

Chickweed

Spotted Spurge

Photos Canva Stock

Post-Emergence Herbicides for Broadleaf Weed Management

Broadleaf herbicides containing two or three active ingredients are the most effective: 2,4-D, MCPP, MCPA, dicamba, mecoprop, quinclorac, or triclopyr. These ingredients are potent and poisonous. Always carefully read and follow the label instructions.

Liquid products are readily available in both ready-to-use and concentrate formulations. Granular products are often combined with fertilizer; using these "weed and feed" products is not recommended. If you prefer to use a granular post-emergence herbicide, check the ingredients list on the label to ensure it does not include fertilizer.

Apply broadleaf herbicides only when needed and when most effective. Here are some guidelines:

- The best time to apply is when weeds naturally transport nutrients to their roots in the fall. Getting the herbicide to the weeds' roots is key to killing them. Applications in the spring may require repeat applications.
- Spot spray only on weedier areas of the lawn. Choose a ready-to-use product to avoid mixing, and only buy enough product for one season's use. If you plan to use a concentrate mixed with water in a sprayer, dedicate it to the herbicide and clearly mark it.
- Spray during the right conditions:

- Drift can damage vegetables, flowers, trees, and shrubs. Spray on a calm day when the wind is less than 5 mph. It's best to cover plants you don't want to kill to protect them from overspray.
- Apply the spray when the temperature is less than 90 degrees. In hotter conditions, the herbicide evaporates or turns to vapor, and turf damage may occur.
- Water your lawn 2 - 3 days before applying the herbicide. Drought-stressed turf is more susceptible to damage from the herbicide.
- Do not mow immediately before or after spraying to ensure the spray makes good contact with the weeds' leaves.
- Treat when no rain is forecast for at least 24 hours.
- Granular broadleaf weed herbicides should be applied when the weed foliage is wet, either early in the morning when the dew is on the leaves or after irrigating the area. The granules must stick to the foliage to be effective.

Preventing Weeds

There are several ways to prevent weeds from popping up:

- Cut the lawn tall (3-4 inches). The blades shade the emerging weeds and prevent them from getting established.
- Use a mulching blade on your mower and leave the grass clippings on the lawn. They also smother the emerging weed seedlings and recycle nutrients into the soil.
- Maintaining a healthy lawn through proper irrigation and fertilization will crowd out broadleaf weeds.
- Apply a pre-emergence herbicide to your lawn. According to Neil Sperry, these are the timing guidelines for pre-emergence herbicide application (<https://neilsperry.com/2013/01/what-is-the-right-time-for-preemergents/>):

“Spring application (primarily for crabgrass and grassburs): March 5 — 15.

Second spring application (due to long growing season and possibility that crabgrass and grassburs could still germinate): June 5 — 15. There is no point in making this application if you did not make the first one.

Fall application (primarily for cool-season grassy weeds such as annual bluegrass, rescuegrass and rye): September 1 — 10.

Fall application (primarily for broadleaf weeds such as henbit, dandelions, clover and chickweed): September 1 — 10. This treatment can be made the same day as the application for grassy weed prevention, but do them sequentially. Do not try to mix granules in your spreader.”

Sources and Resources

Learn more about managing weeds in your lawn at these links:

“What is the proper way to apply broadleaf herbicides to the lawn?”. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. <https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/faq/what-proper-way-apply-broadleaf-herbicides-lawn>

“Herbicide Options for Managing Common Lawn Weeds in Maryland”. The University of Maryland Extension. <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/herbicide-options-managing-common-lawn-weeds-maryland>

“Managing Weeds In Warm Season Lawns”. Clemson Cooperative Extension. <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/managing-weeds-in-warm-season-lawns/>

“Maintaining St. Augustinegrass Lawns” and “Maintaining Bermudagrass Lawns”. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. <https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/library/landscaping/maintaining-st-augustinegrass-lawns/>
http://publications.tamu.edu/TURF_LANDSCAPE/PUB_turf_Maintaining%20Bermudagrass%20Lawns.pdf