Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

**Dallisgrass and Goosegrass – Difficult to Manage Summer Lawn Weeds**

Dallisgrass (Paspalum dilatatum) and goosegrass (Eleusine indica) are two of the most challenging turfgrass weeds in Tennessee to control. As a general rule, the longer they have been established, the more difficult it will be to control. Both are clumpy, low growing, spreading type grass weeds with seed heads that grow on spikes.

Dallisgrass is a coarse-textured, clumping, perennial grass that spreads from short, thick rhizomes and seed. Goosegrass on the other hand is a problematic annual grass weed. Goosegrass thrives in compacted, poorly drained soils; consequently, it is commonly found in the high-traffic areas of sports fields, golf courses, and residential and commercial lawns. Goosegrass is not often found in healthy, growing turf.

Control options for dallisgrass are limited and labor intensive. The best control is don’t let it become established. Once established, sulfonylurea herbicides or spot treatments with a glyphosate herbicide can be used to control or hopefully eliminate dallisgrass. Probably the best homeowner control option for dallisgrass is a spot treatment of a glyphosate herbicide or a sulfonylurea product. Remember glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide and can injure or kill surrounding desirable grasses. It will take more than one treatment since these plants have rhizomes and there is a seed bed ready to germinate at the first opportunity. Bare spots left after the eradication of the dallisgrass leaves the perfect opportunity for other weeds to take advantage so quick renovation of these bare spots is essential.

Goosegrass control options vary. Implementing cultural practices to maximize turfgrass quality (proper mowing, fertility and pest management, etc.) will help prevent goosegrass infestation. Improving soil conditions in these high-traffic areas will also help make the turf more competitive against goosegrass. Core aeration and altering traffic patterns can relieve compaction, improving both soil aeration and drainage.

Goosegrass has a centralized root system that makes mechanical removal easier than for many other weeds. Small plants can be removed by hand, but once the plants grow to 2-3 inches in diameter, a knife or gardening tool is useful. If one has the time and there are a limited number of weeds in a given area, hand or mechanical removal can be effective. However, mechanical removal is a very labor-intensive process.

Pre-emergence herbicides provide effective goosegrass control. Several herbicide options for pre-emergence goosegrass control are available. Many of the materials applied for pre-emergence crabgrass control will also control goosegrass. Data from the University of Tennessee have shown that sequential applications of pre-emergence herbicides will provide an increased level of goosegrass control, as well as extend the length of crabgrass control provided by these materials. The fact that goose-
grass germinates later in the season than crabgrass makes a sequential application strategy essential. Target the initial application for mid-March to early April and the sequential application 6-8 weeks later.

Numerous postemergence herbicides are also available for goosegrass control. Caution should be exercised when applying these materials, as they can potentially injure turf if applied imprecisely. Postemergence herbicides for goosegrass control should be applied after goosegrass seed has germinated; any time from late May through early August is appropriate.

Any herbicide used should be labeled for turf, the weed to be controlled and the use area where it is to be applied. (Source: Breeden & Brosnan, University of Tennessee Extension)

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

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