

Weeds, Weeds, Everywhere

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The hard freeze in November and then mild weather and plenty of moisture has resulted in a bountiful winter weed crop. The plants have produced lots of foliage and now, for the next month they will be trying to produce seed.

If you have a thin summer lawn because of poor soil and /or shade, the area is probably green and lush from the growth of rescue grass or annual bluegrass this winter. Mowed every two weeks the grassy weeds produce an attractive winter lawn. The rescue grass blades will become more coarse and tough as we get close to spring but mowing continues to be the best control, and the way to reduce seed production.

Bedstraw is another weed that is prospering this winter. It forms a mat of sticky vegetation that spreads up and out from the shrub border onto the lawn. To control bedstraw on the lawn it can be mowed or the contact herbicides for broadleaf weeds work. Fertilome's Weed Free Zone is an especially good choice because it functions at lower temperatures than the other contact herbicides. It is relatively easy to collect bedstraw from shrub borders with a steel rake. The vegetation compresses to small mats that are great compost pile additions.

If you have raised bed flower or vegetable gardens, the henbit with its purple flowers and chickweed with its small white flowers have probably filled every space between and in the plant rows. The two weeds are lush and in addition to competing for space, nutrients, and water with you garden plants, they increase foliage fungus and slugs and snails on garden plants.

The henbit and chickweed can be killed with a contact herbicide for broad-leaf weeds but if it is growing in the midst of your snapdragons, stocks, onions or beets it will need to be pulled by hand. It even benefits your bluebonnets, poppies and other wildflowers if you pull up some of the chickweed and henbit competing with them in the spare lot.

One of my least favorite weeds is beggar lice. The seed sticks to pets and your jeans. The plant resembles wild carrot. A tactic that works well in controlling the beggar lice to prevent seed production is to use a string mower to cut down the upright growing plant before it sets seed. While you are at it cut down the sowthistle, dandelions and other tall weeds that are growing on your fence line and the corners of the shrub border.

The abundance of winter weeds this year may encourage area gardeners to make more use of pre-emergent herbicide next year. Products like Amaze, Dimension, and XL are very effective in preventing the germination of winter annual weeds if they are applied on or before September 1.

The products also work to prevent germination of summer weeds such as sandburs and crabgrass if they are applied now and again in 90 days (June1). Review the label instructions on herbicides before you purchase them to make sure the product you are considering will control the weeds that you want to control. It is also important (and the law) to comply with label instructions to protect yourself and the environment.

Oak Wilt and Spring Vegetables

Readers interested in the topics of spring vegetable gardening and oak wilt are invited to a free program on Saturday March 2 that I will conduct at 6800 Dorothy Louise Dr sponsored by Milbergers and the Dreamhill Estates neighborhood from 9:30 -11:00am. Dorothy Louise Drive intersects Babcock at the Medical Center just west of Loop 410. Attendees will receive a free HM8849 transplant, the 2019 Rodeo tomato. Call 210 382 4455 if you have questions.