

Controlling Nutsedges



It's not a grass – It's a sedge!

Nutsedges are aggressive and persistent weeds that commonly infest lawns, vegetable and flower gardens, and landscapes. They can be very difficult to eradicate and their control is likely to be a long process. Successful control involves both cultural and chemical management methods.

Yellow Nutsedge (aka chufa, nutgrass, or watergrass): It is important to remember that yellow nutsedge is not a grass or broadleaf weed, but a sedge and must be treated differently than most lawn weeds. It can be identified by the triangular shape of its stem (you can feel the shape by rolling the stem in your fingertips). The leaves are arranged in groups of three which also distinguishes it from grasses. The leaves are light green to yellowish and each leaf has a long, tapered tip. It is a perennial plant that reproduces primarily by small underground tubers — called nutlets — that form at the end of underground stems — called rhizomes. A single plant can produce several hundred of these tubers during the summer, and also spread by rhizomes. This nutsedge actively grows during the heat of summer when cool-season turf grows more slowly. It sometimes thrives in over-moist areas or in areas with poor drainage.

To be effective, you will need to implement a sedge control program early in the season and continue it for more than a year to reduce tuber populations in the soil and prevent the spread of this weed.

If only a few yellow nutsedge plants are present, hand pulling will help eliminate the weeds but will not remove the tubers in the soil. Several weeks after pulling

yellow nutsedge, check the area to see if the plants have regrown from the tubers. For yellow nutsedge in landscape beds, it is best to remove the entire plant by digging around the plant's base. This will help ensure that you will not get regrowth from the nutsedge's underground rhizomes.

Control with Herbicides

Herbicides may be required when large patches of nutsedge are present. The traditional herbicides used to control dandelions and crabgrass are ineffective since yellow nutsedge is not a broadleaf or grass. However, the chemicals recommended for nutsedge, for the most part, cover other sedges. Several herbicides are available to the homeowners that are labeled for nutsedge control. They are found in many brands, with the chemicals bentazon, imazaquin, sulfentrazone or halosulfuron being on the top of the list. Of these options, sulfentrazone and halosulfuron are preferred. Both of these are tolerated by our commonly used grasses. Because of the waxy coat of nutsedge, some will need a "spreader sticker" added to the herbicide. This helps the chemical to adhere to the plant's leaves. Be aware that they will need to be applied twice in a summer, and it may take 2-3 years for complete control. Always follow label directions for use, application and when to make follow-up applications, if needed.

Once a nutsedge infestation has been controlled, sanitation to prevent new introductions is critical. Any new infestations should be managed immediately to prevent spread.

There is also a Purple Nutsedge which requires a different herbicide. See this link for [proper herbicide for the purple nutsedge.](#)

Additional nutsedge details can be found here -

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ay/ay-19-w.pdf>

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7432.html>

<http://turf.okstate.edu/pest-management/weeds/hla6423-grassyweeds.pdf>