

Pre-Emergent Weed Control

It has been said that a weed is but an unloved flower. Not for the majority of us. Most of us hate those weeds, especially the ones that come up early in the season. Also, most like a weed-free lawn but a truly weed-free lawn requires a multi-faceted approach and must be repeated.

To achieve a lawn that is (nearly) free from weeds that propagate themselves by dropping seeds (especially crabgrass), it is imperative to interrupt its propagation cycle by using a pre-emergent. Pre-emergent weed control is using an herbicide that forms a barrier at the soil line which interrupts this propagation cycle by keeping the seeds from germinating in the first place.

There is a bit more to it than simply spreading the herbicide. The following aspects need to be considered for successful weed prevention:

- **Timing:** Most pre-emergent herbicides will not kill weeds that have germinated prior to application. Therefore, try to apply these herbicides several weeks before germination. Crabgrass generally starts to germinate when the soil temperature has been above 50 degrees for several days.
- **Preparation:** To make sure the herbicide can get to the soil where weed seed is located remove excessive thatch and debris such as leaves and cuttings before you apply the herbicide. Read carefully and follow all manufacturers' label directions.
- **Coverage:** For uniform coverage, divide the recommended amount of granular herbicide into two equal portions, then spread each half in opposite directions. Do not use more product than recommended by the manufacturer (more is not better!).
- **Activation:** Water in the pre-emergent herbicide if $\frac{1}{2}$ " of rain does not occur within 24 - 48 hours following application. All pre-emergent herbicides are soil applied and MUST be "washed" into the soil where weed seeds are located.
- **Second application:** A second application may be required for season-long control. Timing is generally about 6 weeks following initial application.

Cautions: Be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions. Do not use a pre-emergent herbicide where you will be seeding or re-seeding.

Ultimately, the best weed prevention is strong and healthy lawns so, in addition to weed control, make sure you are giving your lawn what it needs to grow healthy.

For much more in-depth and detailed information on the application aspects stated above, see OSU Fact Sheet [HLA-6421](#).

One other helpful OSU fact sheet reference on Landscape Maintenance Schedule is [HLA-6408](#).