

## **Prepare to Fight Crabgrass**

With spring comes beautiful tulips, daffodils, forsythia, redbuds and flowering pears. Its also a time when our lawns could fall victim to pesky crabgrass. The best prevention for lawn weeds is to grow strong, healthy turf grass. If you know your lawn typically struggles with crabgrass, now is the time to prepare to fight the battle.

Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work. They don't actually keep the seed from germinating; rather, the germinating plant takes up some of the herbicide and is killed. Crabgrass preventers are just that-- preventers. With few exceptions they will have no effect on existing crabgrass plants. Therefore, preventers have to be applied before crabgrass germinates. Additionally, they don't last forever once applied to the soil. Microorganisms and natural processes in the soil begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. Therefore, if some products are applied too early, they may have lost much of their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are fairly ineffective after about 60 days, although there is considerable variation among products (Dimension and Barricade are longer lasting).

For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1, or a little later. Therefore, April 15 is a good target date for which to apply the preventer. This gives the active ingredients some time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. Weather varies from one spring to the next, and with it the timing of crabgrass germination. For this reason application-timing of preventers is sometimes based on the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern redbud tree is a good one to use. When the trees in your area are approaching full-bloom, apply your crabgrass preventer. A follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later, unless you are using Dimension or Barricade.

*Lynn Loughary is the Horticulture Agent for Wyandotte County, K-State Research and Extension. She can be reached by calling 913-299-9300, or by email [lloughar@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:lloughar@oznet.ksu.edu)*