

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Homan November 5, 2021

Post Rock Extension District Horticulture Agent

Control Broadleaf Weeds in the Fall:

Our garden chores are finally starting to slow down, however, now is a great time to control broadleaf weeds in your lawn. Henbit and other winter annuals, such as chickweed, speedwell, and knotweed germinate in the fall but are most noticeable in the spring. However, if chemical control efforts are delayed until spring, their effectiveness is usually very limited.

The best course of action is to control these weeds in late October or early November (after most henbit has germinated). Use a postemergence broadleaf herbicide, such as Weed Free Zone, Trimec, Weed-Out, Weed Stop 2X or Weed-B-Gon. This approach works well because henbit is relatively easy to kill in the fall and many people want to treat dandelions now as well. With this approach, most of the henbit will be killed but, because small numbers of henbit continue to germinate through the late fall and winter, some plants may be missed. Just remember you may have to do some spot-spraying in the spring if you want to get all the weeds controlled.

Henbit and other weeds will not be very competitive in dense, healthy lawns, so good cultural management will reduce the need for herbicides. If spring applications of these herbicides are used instead of a fall application, complete control is unlikely. It is usually best to just mow regularly and give your lawn an application of nitrogen in early May (this is for cool season lawns; early May would be too early to fertilize warm-season grasses). Because henbit and chickweed are winter annuals, they will die when temperatures get hot.

Late October to early November is also the most effective time to control dandelions. Dandelions produce a flush of new plants in late September. Currently these young plants are small and easily controlled with herbicides such as 2,4-D or combination products like; (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Even established dandelions are more easily controlled now than in the spring because they are actively moving materials from the top portion of the plant to the roots in the fall. Herbicides will translocate to the roots and will kill the plant from the roots up.

Choose a day that is 50 degrees or higher. The better the weed is growing; the more weed killer will be moved from the leaves to the roots. Cold temperatures will slow this process but these products will still work at lower temperatures.

Weed Free Zone (also sold under the name of Speed Zone) contains the three active ingredients mentioned above, plus carfentrazone. It will give a quicker response than the other products mentioned especially as temperatures move below 50 degrees. Treatment now will get rid of most broadleaf weeds however, you will still need to spot spray in the spring.

Taking good care of your lawn in the fall is the key to lush, green grass in the spring. Controlling broadleaf weeds now, will save you the headache of dealing with them when the weather warms up. If you have any questions about your lawn reach out to your local Post Rock District Extension Office.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at choman@ksu.edu or by calling Beloit (738-3597).