

A WORD ABOUT THOSE WASCALLY WEEDS...

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Weed control in lawns is an integral part of turf care management practices. It has spawned an industry of chemical herbicides and nifty tools to kill off anything that has the nerve to invade our beloved expanse of grass.

Let's start at the beginning. What is a weed? The dictionary defines it as a wild plant growing where it is not wanted and in competition with cultivated plants, and I might add, growing much more vigorously than our preferred ones! Many of the plants that are considered weeds today were important food sources for our ancestors. Dandelion, plantain, purslane, and watercress are great examples of "weeds" being served in high-end restaurants these days!

The first step in weed control is to utilize good cultural practices. Keeping your grass healthy by mowing high, feeding and irrigating at the right times of the year and planting tested grass seed varieties developed for our area, is a great place to start. But even doing all the right things, you may still have to do more. Learning to identify weeds and to eliminate them properly is important for all of us who would like to have both a nice lawn and a healthy environment. Even those of you who have lawn services need to be aware of the chemicals used to treat for weeds, pests, and diseases, especially if you have children or pets.

Weeds come in an endless variety of **broadleaf** (dandelion, chickweed, plantain, etc.) and **grassy** (crabgrass, goose grass etc.) types. Some come back every year (**perennials**) while many last only a growing season

(summer and winter **annuals**). Several are **biennial** meaning that they take two years to complete their life cycles. This is important because, like in life, timing is every thing. When you spray can be as important as what you spray them with. Summer annual broadleaf weeds are generally controlled best in the spring when they begin sprouting and winter annual broadleaf weeds in the fall. The selective herbicides (specifically formulated to eliminate certain vegetation) for homeowners include 2,4-D, MCPP, MCPA, dicamba, triclopyr, and carfentrazone. These are contact sprays or granules that will kill broadleaf weeds without harming the grass. Some of these products can move through the soil and can harm trees and shrubs so read all labels carefully before applying. Pre-emergents, or herbicides that prevent weed seeds from sprouting in the first place, can also be used. Many grassy type weeds such as crabgrass and poa annua (annual bluegrass) are treated this way. A grassy weed such as Wiregrass (common Bermuda grass) is best treated with glyphosate, a Roundup-type of product. This is a non-selective product meaning it will kill anything off it touches. Kudzu, poison ivy, tree of heaven are weeds that are really persistent and you may have to treat them repeatedly until they finally give up the ghost! Yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*), is a grassy weed that spreads by rhizomes, seeds, and underground tubers and is immune to common herbicides. Look for products that specifically say they are for nutsedges. Many of our most annoying weeds such as plantain, wild strawberry, dandelions and wild violets are best treated in the fall when they are actively growing and moving food and water throughout the plant. Unfortunately, there are not many organic weed control products out there. Corn gluten meal is one such weed pre-emergent. Contact sprays of commercial grade vinegar or clove oil sprays are also available. Of course, you can always just dig them out. I used to pay my kids a nickel for every weed they dug up. Oh, those were the days!

VA Tech's Weed ID Guide (<http://oak.ppws.vt.edu/weedindex.htm>) and VA Tech's Pest Management Guide-Home, Grounds, and Animals (<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/456-018.html>) can help you get started. For additional horticultural questions contact the Bedford Extension Master Gardener Help Line at 540 586-7675 or email us at bedfordmg@vt.edu.

As always, follow label directions to prevent unnecessary accidents and contamination of our environment. Personal safety and care of our land, streams, and waterways are every one's responsibility.

For those of you who would like more information on best practices for basic lawn care and maintenance, sign up for the Fall 2014 Bedford County Library Seminar “I FOUGHT THE LAWN AND THE LAWN WON!”. This FREE program will be presented at all Bedford County libraries beginning Saturday, August 23rd. While it is not necessary to pre-register, it is recommended. To register for the seminars, call or sign up at your local Bedford County library (see dates, times listed below) or the Bedford County VCE office (540) 586-7675.

MONTVALE LIBRARY (540) 425-7006
Saturday, August 23rd @11:00am-12:30

BIG ISLAND LIBRARY (540) 425-7000
Tuesday, September 2nd @1:00pm-2:30pm

MONETA/SML LIBRARY (540) 425-7004
Thursday, September 4th @6:30pm-8:00pm

FOREST LIBRARY (540) 425-7002
Saturday, September 6 @11:00am-12:30pm

BEDFORD MAIN LIBRARY (540) 586-8911
Tuesday, September 9 @11:00am-12:30pm

STEWARTSVILLE LIBRARY (540) 425-7008
Saturday, September 13 @11:00am-12:30

BROADLEAF WEEDS



DANDELION



CHICKWEED



HENBIT



PLANTAIN



GOOSE GRASS



CRABGRASS



YELLOW NUTSEGE

If you are a person with disability and require any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this event, contact Scott Baker, VCE-Bedford, at 540.586.7675 (TDD # 800.828.1120) during business hours (8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.) at least 5 days prior to this event.