

Annual Bluegrass Control

Factsheet | HGIC 2325 | **Updated:** Aug 29, 2018

Annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is a cool-season, annual grass that spreads by seed. Annual bluegrass has a tufted habit with a bright green leaf color and fine texture. It is native to Europe and is found worldwide.



Annual bluegrass clumping growth habit.
Millie Davenport, © 2010, HGIC, Clemson Extension

Annual bluegrass has smooth leaves with a boat-shaped tip. It produces greenish white seed heads throughout its life cycle with the majority appearing during the spring months. It can be found growing in a wide variety of conditions, but prefers areas with moist and/or compacted soil.

Before starting a weed control program, homeowners should realize that complete eradication of annual bluegrass (or any weed) from the landscape is not practical. A more realistic approach is to manage (not eradicate) the weed by

reducing the infestation to a tolerable level.



Smooth leaf blade of annual bluegrass with boat shaped tip.

Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org



Annual bluegrass seed heads.
Millie Davenport, © 2010, HGIC, Clemson Extension

Control in Lawns

Maintaining the health and density of your lawn is the best method for preventing a weed problem. Proper mowing height, irrigation and fertilization of the turfgrass are the best defenses against weeds. For more information on these topics, see the following fact sheets: [HGIC 1201, *Fertilizing Lawns*](#); [HGIC 1205, *Mowing Lawns*](#); and [HGIC 1207, *Watering Lawns*](#).

If annual bluegrass does become a problem in a turfgrass area, it can be dug up easily before it is well established. Large patches may be difficult to dig up, and an herbicide may be required. If an herbicide treatment is chosen, it is best to start treatments in the fall before seeds germinate.

Pre-emergence herbicides should be applied to well-established lawns in late summer or early fall when temperatures drop to a daytime high of 75 °F for 4 consecutive days. Pre-emergence herbicides that give good to excellent control of annual bluegrass are benefin, dithiopyr, oryzalin, pendimethalin, and prodiamine. These five herbicides are labeled for use on centipedegrass, zoysiagrass, bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass, and turfgrass tall fescue lawns. For many products, a second application may need to be applied later in the fall for continued control. However, if any of these weed-grass pre-emergence herbicides are applied in the fall on a tall fescue lawn, these lawns cannot be over-seeded with additional fescue that fall. Read the product label for its duration of control. Apply at the label rate for *Poa annua* control and water in the product after application. Examples of products for use in residential lawns in homeowner sizes are:

- Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed & Grass Stopper containing Dimension Granules (dithiopyr)
- Sta-Green Crab-Ex Crabgrass Preventer Granules (dithiopyr)
- Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer for Lawns & Landscape Beds Granules (dithiopyr)
- Scott's Halts Crabgrass & Grassy Weed Preventer Granules (pendimethalin)
- Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control Granules (benefin & trifluralin)
- Anderson Turf Products Crabgrass Preventer with 2% Team Herbicide Granules (benefin & trifluralin)
- Lebanon Pro Fertilizer (0-0-7) with Prodiamine Granules (prodiamine)
- Lesco Stonewall Plus Fertilizer (0-0-7) Granules (prodiamine)
- Pennington Crabgrass Control with Prodiamine & 0-0-7 Granules (prodiamine)
- Pro-Mate Barracade Plus Fertilizer 0-0-7 Granules (prodiamine)
- Southern Ag Surflan Pre-emergent Herbicide Concentrate (oryzalin)
- Monterey Weed Impede Concentrate (oryzalin)

There are pre-emergence herbicides for sale that combine nitrogen-containing fertilizers along with the herbicide. The best time to apply the pre-emergence herbicide is not necessarily the best time to apply the fertilizer. Only those with 0-0-7 fertilizer (7% potash) have been listed.

CAUTION: Pre-emergence herbicides are not selective and can prevent the development of turfgrass seeds and the development of roots on turfgrass sprigs and plugs. Read the label for time to wait before seeding a treated area.

Atrazine can be applied to St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass for post-emergence control of annual bluegrass. Apply atrazine in November and again in early January. Atrazine can be applied up to two times per year. It should NOT be applied to newly seeded lawns due to the detrimental effect it has on seed development. Delay atrazine applications to newly sodded and sprigged lawns until they are well established and actively growing. Examples of atrazine products for residential lawns in homeowner sizes are:

- Hi-Yield Atrazine Weed Killer
- Southern Ag Atrazine St Augustine Weed Killer
- Image for St. Augustinegrass & Centipedegrass with Atrazine
- Spectracide Weed Stop for Lawns for St. Augustine & Centipede lawns RTS

CAUTION: Atrazine can travel through soil and enter ground water, please read the label for all environmental precautions. Users are advised not to apply atrazine to sand or loamy sand soils where the water table (groundwater) is close to the surface and where these soils are very permeable, i.e., well-drained. Do not apply atrazine herbicide within two times the width of the drip line of desirable hardwood trees and shrubs.

Non-selective herbicides such as glyphosate can be used for spot treatments; however, nearby desirable grasses and plants can be severely injured. Glyphosate is most effective when applied to young weeds in November. Annual bluegrass plants that are found growing in April and May will dieback as temperatures rise, so it is not necessary to treat them at that time. Examples of glyphosate products in homeowner sizes are:

- Roundup Original Concentrate,
- Roundup Pro Herbicide,
- Martin's Eraser Systemic Weed & Grass Killer,
- Quick Kill Grass & Weed Killer,
- Bonide Kleenup Weed & Grass Killer 41% Super Concentrate,
- Hi-Yield Super Concentrate,
- Maxide Super Concentrate 41% Weed & Grass Killer,
- Super Concentrate Killzall Weed & Grass Killer,
- Tiger Brand Quick Kill Concentrate,
- Ultra Kill Weed & Grass Killer Concentrate,
- Gordon's Groundwork Concentrate 50% Super Weed & Grass Killer,
- Zep Enforcer Weed Defeat III,
- Eliminator Weed & Grass Killer Super Concentrate,
- Monterey Remuda Full Strength 41% Glyphosate,
- Knock Out Weed & Grass Killer Super Concentrate,
- Southern States Grass & Weed Killer Concentrate II,
- Total Kill Pro Weed & Grass Killer Herbicide,
- Ace Concentrate Weed & Grass Killer.

Note: Once annual bluegrass has been eliminated in turfgrass, bare spots will be left behind. To prevent the invasion of new weeds in these bare spots, plan to fill them in with plugs or sprigs of the desired turfgrass at the appropriate planting time. For more information on renovating a lawn, see [HGIC 1204, Lawn Renovation](#).

Control in Vegetable Gardens

When planning a vegetable garden, it is best to attempt to treat weeds before tilling the soil. Tilling can break up and spread weed seed throughout the garden plot. Some methods used to reduce weeds in the vegetable garden include

hand pulling, hoeing, mulching and applying post-emergence herbicides.

Hand pulling or hoeing weeds is only a practical choice for small garden plots. If hand pulling is chosen, be sure to work when the soil is moist so roots can be removed easily. When cultivating between the rows to control weeds, use care not to damage the roots of crops.

Organic mulch (such as pine needles, old hay or grass clippings) can be used in the garden to help suppress annual bluegrass development. Before laying the mulch, apply a layer of six to eight wet newspaper sheets to act as a weed barrier. The newspaper layer prevents weed development by blocking light to the weeds underneath, preventing their growth. Best of all, the newspaper should decompose before the following spring. To prevent low oxygen levels in the root zone, keep organic mulch levels at a maximum of 3 inches. For more information on mulching a vegetable garden, see [HGIC 1253, *Controlling Weeds by Cultivating & Mulching*](#).

Pre-emergence herbicides can be used in the fall garden to prevent weed germination. Trifluralin, also called by the trade name Treflan, can be used on some vegetable crops. It should be applied to prepared soil and incorporated 2 inches deep before planting. NOTE: Trifluralin is not safe to use on every garden plant. See the herbicide label for application timing and safety for each crop species, the proper application rate, and watering-in instructions. Examples of products containing trifluralin for use in home vegetable gardens are:

- Preen Garden Weed Preventer Granules Containing Treflan
- Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules
- Monterey Vegetable & Ornamental Weeder – Weed & Grass Preventer Concentrate

- Miracle-Gro Garden Weed Preventer Granules

Lastly, a non-selective, post-emergence herbicide can be used to treat the garden plot before planting. Glyphosate can be applied to the garden plot 3 days prior to planting. Check the label for precautions for individual crops. Glyphosate sprays are most effective when weeds are actively growing, so do not apply during extreme heat, cold or drought conditions. For examples of glyphosate products in homeowner sizes, please see list in the “Control in Lawns” section.

Control in Landscape Beds

In landscape beds, annual bluegrass can be hand dug or controlled with an herbicide. As mentioned previously, it is best to prevent the invasion of annual bluegrass by maintaining optimum cultural conditions and using a 3-inch mulch layer to block weed development. Once annual bluegrass has made its way into the landscape bed, an herbicide may be necessary if hand pulling or hoeing is not practical.

Pre-emergence herbicides can be used to prevent weed germination in the fall. Trifluralin, also called by the trade name Treflan, can be applied around certain landscape plants. Read the herbicide label for a full list of plant species that are tolerant, the proper application rate, and watering-in instructions. Examples of products containing trifluralin for use in home landscapes are:

- Preen Garden Weed Preventer Granules
- Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules Containing Treflan
- Monterey Vegetable & Ornamental Weeder – Weed & Grass Preventer Concentrate
- Miracle-Gro Garden Weed Preventer Granules

Dithiopyr is another excellent pre-emergence herbicide for use around many ornamental landscape plants to prevent weeds. Read the herbicide label for a full list of plant species that are tolerant, the proper application rate, and watering-in instructions. Examples of products containing dithiopyr for use in home landscapes are:

- Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed & Grass Stopper containing Dimension Granules (dithiopyr)
- Sta-Green Crab-Ex Crabgrass & Weed Preventer Granules (dithiopyr)

- Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer for Lawns & Landscape Beds Granules (dithiopyr)

Glyphosate can be used for spot treatments around ornamental plants. However, glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide that can harm any plant and should be used with caution. Do not allow glyphosate spray mist to contact ornamental foliage or stems as injury will occur. For examples of glyphosate products in homeowner sizes, please see list in the "Control in Lawns" section. As with all pesticides, read and follow all label instructions and precautions.

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