

Seasonal Update

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Guidelines for Eliminating Annual Bluegrass

Annual Bluegrass is a grassy weed found throughout many parts of the world. Here in New York, the struggle to eliminate this weed generally occurs on homeowner lawns and on golf course bentgrass greens and tees.

As the name suggests, it is not a perennial grass like many of our desirable lawn types such as Kentucky bluegrass or ryegrass, but rather a winter annual that germinates in August and September from the seed it has produced in the earlier months of the growing season. Annual Bluegrass is a prolific seeder and can produce up to 3000 seeds per square foot. Additionally, it is susceptible to a number of turf pests including turf pathogens like anthracnose.

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Cultural Management

If undesirable weeds like annual bluegrass are present on an isolated site, the infested area of turf may be removed with a sod cutter and reseeded. Removal of the upper 2 inches of soil may also assist in removal of significant amounts of weed seed. It is also important to keep in mind that germination rates of annual bluegrass may be reduced if lawn disturbance is avoided in August or September when annual bluegrass is germinating. Core aeration and other practices that disturb the soil should be delayed until October.

Because annual bluegrass thrives on moist, well-fertilized sites, minimizing lawn irrigation in the summer months and significantly reducing fertilization (in some cases by 30–40%) can also be an important part of a holistic annual bluegrass management plan.

Chemical Management

For settings where turfgrass is being managed commercially, such as golf course bentgrass greens, monthly applications of Paclobutrazol (Trimmit, Turf Enhancer, TGR) may be applied at

a rate of 8 oz. per acre. Applications should not begin until 100% green up and should occur no later than October 1st. Special care should be taken on low cut greens and low vigor turf. On sandy soils, product applications should occur at the low rate.

Ethofumesate (Prograss) may be applied in late August or early September with a follow-up treatment 30 to 60 days later to control annual bluegrass seedlings on ryegrass lawns and reduce annual bluegrass populations the following season. Product application should not take place before ryegrass seedlings are 1 inch in height. Do not exceed 4lb. AI/A per year. Applications may need to take place over a period of three growing seasons to reduce annual bluegrass populations below 5%.

Pendimethalin (Pre-M) may be applied late August through mid-September with a follow-up treatment 30 days later to offer post and preemergent control of annual bluegrass on Kentucky bluegrass lawns and reduce annual bluegrass populations the following season. Applications may need to take place over a period of three growing seasons to reduce annual bluegrass populations below 5%.

An important note: using the above products and many other preemergence herbicides will significantly limit the ability to overseed in the fall and the following spring.

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