

Crabgrass, Clopyralid and Other Weedy Matters

Aaron Hathaway and Ronald Calhoun
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences

Patient Crabgrass Makes Late Appearance

The spring of 2002 brought cool temperatures to most of Michigan which persisted through the first week of June. These conditions were not conducive for vigorous turfgrass growth. The remainder of June was characterized by extremely hot conditions and low precipitation. By the time soil temperatures were high enough to facilitate crabgrass germination there was not enough soil moisture to support establishment. The dry conditions of June and most of July resulted in thin turf in unirrigated sites. Recent rains have helped pull most areas back out of dormancy. However, crabgrass germination was rampant at the end of July making the most of adequate soil moisture and openings in the turf. To make the situation worse, most of our preemergence materials have been in place for over three months. In many instances the barrier that remains is not sufficient to inhibit this late flush of crabgrass. In the past, many turfgrass practitioners used a split-timing approach for their preemergence herbicides. Many of the more economical products would have benefited from this approach in 2002. In our preemergence trial that was established on April 15, the split-timed applications that received a booster shot on June 15 were holding very well. Long residual products like Barricade and Dimension are also providing excellent control in this, late crabgrass year. However, in most years a low rate of Dimension granular (0.25 lb ai/A) will provide excellent control. This does not seem to be the case in 2002.

A Lawn Goodbye for Clopyralid

In late July, Dow AgroSciences announced that they were voluntarily removing certain uses of clopyralid. This affects the label of clopyralid for use on residential sites. Dow's decision was made in response to reports of contaminated compost in the state of Washington. A grower there lost a crop of tomatoes that he was trying to grow in a compost growing media that included clopyralid treated grass clippings. Although clopyralid degrades rapidly in the soil, the degradation is significantly slower in compost. The decision to remove residential uses of clopyralid will limit some of the herbicide choices that we have come accustomed to in recent years. Clopyralid is very active on clover, medic and thistle and is included in many postemergence broadleaf products (Confront, Momentum, Millennium Ultra and Battleship). Golf courses, commercial properties and sod farms will retain their labels. Returning clippings is the key to proper dissipation of clopyralid. Clippings should always be returned or at least for six weeks following application. If clippings are collected and composted, the compost should not be used for one year.

In response to the loss of clopyralid, Dow has been actively pursuing the labeling of fluroxypyr, another pyridine class herbicide, to replace clopyralid. Fluroxypyr has shown excellent clover activity in our studies and appears to breakdown very rapidly. Currently fluroxypyr is labeled in Europe and has shown good tankmix compatibility with triclopyr and the phenoxy acids (2,4-D,

MCPP, MCPA). If the remaining hurdles are cleared, fluroxypyr could be in place as a replacement in the very near future.

In light of these recent developments the MSU Turf Team would like to remind you that we recommend returning clippings whenever possible. Clippings are mostly water and do not contribute to thatch buildup. Raising mowing heights will help facilitate your ability to return clippings. Returned clippings will also reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilization required by 0.25-0.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet per year.

“Mow high, and let it lie!”

Table 1: Postemergence broadleaf herbicides containing clopyralid.

Product	Rate	Active	Cost per Acre
	Pt/A	Lb/A	
Lontrel	¼-½	0.19	\$ 22.50
Confront	1-2	0.19	\$ 27.50
Millenium Ultra	2-3	0.14	\$ 15.38
TruPower	2-3	0.14	\$ 15.75
Chaser Ultra	2-3	0.14	\$ 15.00
Battleship	3-4	0.07	\$ 17.00
Momentum	3-4	0.07	\$ 18.00