

LAWNCARE ROUNDUP 2006 – RAIN, NUTSEDGE AND CRABGRASS, OH MY!**Ronald Calhoun and Aaron Hathaway**

Yellow Nutsedge: Above average rainfall in much of the state has resulted in a good crop of yellow nutsedge for 2006. Nutsedge is often an indicator of “wet feet” in landscape beds and usually means you should check for an overused or leaky irrigation system. In the yard, yellow nutsedge really stands out due to its bright yellow-green color and rapid growth rate. It is not uncommon for yellow nutsedge to be 1- to 2-inches taller than the rest of the lawn just a day after mowing. Yellow nutsedge can produce 2,400 seeds per plant in a single season in addition to many pea-sized nutlets that can remain in the soil for years (waiting for the next wet season). Identifying young nutsedge plants is critical to getting the best control and minimizing seed and nutlet production. There are currently no reliable preemergence controls for yellow nutsedge. Postemergence control of yellow nutsedge in cool-season turf has traditionally been achieved with bentazon (Basagran), halosulfuron (formerly Manage, now Sedgehammer), and somewhat with MSMA. It should be noted that because none of these products provide control of the nutlets, it is likely that dealing with yellow nutsedge will be a multi-year process. Many turf managers have relied on halosulfuron because of the excellent activity and good cool-season turfgrass safety. As of 2006, halosulfuron is no longer available as Manage. Professional turf managers should now look for this product sold as Sedgehammer from Gowen Co. It now looks like MSMA, and the other organic arsenicals, will not be re-registered by EPA. This will most dramatically affect the DIY market, as MSMA is the only nutsedge product currently sold in big box stores. Two new nutsedge control products, sulfosulfuron (Certainty) and sulfentrazone (Dismiss) were evaluated this year to determine how they would fit into the postemergence arsenal.

Crabgrass: Would you believe two years in a row? And you thought last year was the end-all for crabgrass pressure. Timely rains and plenty of heat contributed to a second consecutive year of heavy crabgrass pressure. As in 2005, the best preemergence strategies seem to be the ones that went out 'late' and those that used split applications. Many turf managers were convinced that they applied their PREs too late in 2005 so they went even earlier in 2006. Unfortunately, most were probably too early in both years as the crabgrass didn't germinate until the rains came. Above average rainfall prolonged the crabgrass germination window and helped minimize seedling mortality i.e. all the young plants survived. Additionally, the high temps only favor the crabgrass and foxtail. The cool-season grasses don't stand a chance in the heat we had in July and the crabgrass can take over. It is pretty unlikely to leach the active ingredients of preemergence herbicides out of the root zone. These products are very water-insoluble and bind very tightly to the organic matter in the soil. It is more likely that early timed apps remained on the soil surface and were broken down by UV light. There are so many variables affecting performance; it's hard to identify just one reason. Remember, any areas of thin turf will likely fill-in with crabgrass whenever we have conditions like 2006. Monitoring soil temps or growing degree-days as a gauge for preemergence application timing in the spring should help minimize failures in future years. We have been burned by early apps two years in a row now.