

TURFGRASS TRENDS

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WEED CONTROL

99% Control Is Not Good Enough

You'll pay if bermudagrass control isn't perfect before planting

By John Boyd

Over the last few years there has been a steady stream of people interested in starting a sod farm coming to my office for advice. One of the most important things that I tell them is to make sure that their fields and the planting material that they use is free of bermudagrass. While 99% weed control is acceptable in almost every situation, is not good enough when it comes to bermudagrass.

My warning is that if bermudagrass control is not meticulous before planting, you will pay later-big time.

The Roundup + Fusilade combination outperformed either herbicide alone and tank mixes of Roundup plus the other grass specific herbicides.

A skirmish line of workers moving across a field equipped with backpack sprayers loaded with a 2% or 3% Roundup solution is a common sight on sod farms across the south. Most likely, they are spot spraying patches of bermudagrass. This is a labor-intensive, moderately effective approach to bermudagrass control.

However, once the bermudagrass population becomes dense and widely distributed, spot treatment becomes hopeless and the field will have to be abandoned or completely renovated.

Bermudagrass contamination problems are not unique to sod farms. If bermudagrass is incomplete during establishment, golf courses, sports fields and lawns will suffer the same fate over time.

Background

There is an incorrect notion among the inexperienced that one application of Roundup at 5 quarts per acre will control bermudagrass. However, this is not the case.

B.J. Johnson, while at University of Georgia, published a paper in 1988 showing that three applications

of Roundup at 2 quarts per acre over the growing season (May, June and August) were needed to achieve 98 to 100% bermudagrass control at one year after treatment.

He also demonstrated that repeat applications were much more important than rate in achieving bermudagrass control. His data showed that one or two applications at 5 quarts per acre were not as effective as three applications at 2 quarts per acre.

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