



WEED CONTROL IN THE 90's

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About the only statement one can make about weeds with any degree of certainty is that they are a fact of life and will plague us in the 90's just as they have in the past. Prior to 1946 weed control took the form of cutting, pulling, hoeing, flooding, burning and digging. Herbicides entered the weed control arena in the 40's resulting in an era of superior weed control and in some cases of herbicide dependency. "Silent Spring", Love Canal, and agent orange illustrated a worst case scenario of environmental problems due to excessive pesticide use, misuse and abuse. At the present time, ground water contamination is a headline issue. More rules and regulations are being demanded and questions of just who has the authority to regulate pesticide application are being debated.

I see more stringent herbicide rules and regulations in the future. EPA is in the process of reassessing risks associated with pesticide use as EPA reregisters pesticides. The end result will probably be more training required in the use, application, and container disposal of herbicides. Public right-to-know rules as spelled out in Ag-29 will probably be expanded. All herbicide applicators of the future will be well trained professionals.

The golf course manager of the future will be managing turfgrasses in

a total integrated growing system. Weed control will be influenced by "best management practices" including the turfgrass root zone growing medium, selection of superior grass species, proper fertilization, correct mowing, intelligent irrigation and all other facets of management that influence the competitiveness of grasses and hence their capacity to discourage weed encroachment. Low mowed golf turf will be weed free turf but general landscape turf will allow minor weed numbers. Some how, some way, the concept of threshold levels of weeds allowable in turf needs to be developed and sold to the public.

Tall growing perennial grasses are excellent deterrents to weeds. Many golf courses and parks have out-of-bounds or non utilized areas that could support native prairie or tall cool season grasses. Xeriscapes fit well into droughty areas.

New herbicides will be available. The mixture of triclopyr and clopyralid (Confront) will provide selective systemic broadleaf control without the use of phenoxy herbicides (2,4-D, 2,4-DP, MCPP). Fenoxaprop (Acclaim) is a very good post emergence selective crabgrass herbicides. Others are on the way. Isoxaben (Gallery) is a promising pre-emergence broadleaf herbicide. Use of pre-emergence herbicides

usually reduces the risk of possible injury to adjacent desirable broadleaf plants.

The 90's will see better herbicide applicators and safer ways of handling pesticides. Water soluble packets of herbicides will become more popular. As an example, a packet of herbicide to treat one acre will be available. Simply drop the packet into the sprayer tank—no weighing necessary or exposure to the herbicide. Returnable herbicide containers will eliminate the container disposal problem. Containers will be configured to eliminate the possibility of cross contamination of their contents. Empty containers will be returned to dealers and reused.

Direct injection sprayers will be used. The spray tank will contain only water. Herbicides in returnable or original containers will be injected and mixed with water before the spray exits the nozzles. The direct injection systems will eliminate the need to dispose of unused spray solution in the tank and eliminate the problem of spray tank reiterate disposal.

We have been favorably impressed with the ability of some of the new turf type tall fescues to withstand heat and drought while successfully keeping weed encroachment to low levels. Laser, a new rough bluegrass cultivar with a desirable green color, may fit well in damp shady sites prone to chickweeds.

I suggest that we look at tighter herbicide use rules not as a hurdle in our path to better turf, but as a challenge—a challenge to manage our turf in a manner that turf competition keeps weeds to an acceptable minimum. What better way to enhance the environment exists?

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