

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

By Roger Funk, Ph.D., Davey Horticultural Institute, Kent, Ohio

Q: Has there been much progress lately in improvement of grass growth regulators (to save mowings)?

A: A number of growth retardants have been researched for turf, and a few such as maleic hydrazide (Maintain 3, MH-30, Slo-Gro, Retard and chlorflurenol [Maintain CF-125]) are available commercially.

Unfortunately, growth retardants are expensive and the results unpredictable. The response from retardant applications is influenced by temperature; rainfall; time, rate and uniformity of application; and turfgrass species and vigor. Most of the chemicals cause yellowing of the grass blades and reduced tillering and rooting, which can have a long-term effect on turf health and density.

The use of growth retardants currently labeled for turfgrass should be limited to low-maintenance, hard-to-mow areas such as median strips and road banks.

Q: At what temperature in the spring would 2,4-D, Dacthal W-75, Endothal, Paraquat have any effect on sprayed weeds?

A: For broadleaf weed control, 2,4-D is effective above freezing, but maximum effectiveness requires actively-growing weeds which occur above 50° F.

Dacthal W-75 is a pre-emergent herbicide that controls germinating seedlings. The temperature at which seeds germinate is dependent upon the species, but if you are primarily concerned with crabgrass, the temperature is about 55° F.

You don't mention the intended use of Endothal, but if it is for aquatic weed control, the weeds should be actively growing, which occurs above 60° F.

Control with paraquat is not temperature-dependent but is affected by the amount of light.

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Q: Please advise best treatment for Japanese weeping cherry for borers.

A: I do not have any phytotoxicity information specific for Japanese weeping cherry, but you might try lindane which is the standard recommendation for borers. Follow the instructions on the label and spray on a day with low humidity, preferably when the temperature is below 85° F.

Q: It has been said that an evergreen's roots should never be allowed to freeze. To what extent or when is that true?

A: Evergreens, particularly broadleaf evergreens, can lose a considerable amount of water through the foliage (transpiration) during the winter. Plants grown on locations exposed to the afternoon sun and/or drying winds are especially susceptible to water loss. If soil water in the root zone is frozen, the root system of the plant cannot absorb enough to replace the amount lost through transpiration. The resultant water deficit is evidenced by winter scorch on the leaves and, under extreme conditions, death of stem tissue or even the entire plant.

To prevent or minimize the potential for winter scorch, plant susceptible evergreens in areas protected from the winter sun and winds. Antidesiccants can be sprayed on the foliage in late November to suppress water loss, and the root area can be thoroughly irrigated to increase soil water.

Q: How would you eliminate night crawlers (long earthworms) from a lawn? This lawn is about 10,000 square feet and has thousands of holes that are caused by these earthworms; they make the lawn too bumpy to mow.

A: There are no compounds that I am aware of labeled for earthworm control. However, chemicals applied for white grub control have reportedly also controlled earthworms.

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