

# PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D

## Growth regulators OK

**Problem:** Can growth regulators or retardants be used on southern grasses such as on 'Floritam' St. Augustinegrass in Florida, etc.? (New York)

**Solution:** Yes, growth regulators or retardants can be used on southern turfgrass like St. Augustinegrass. In a 1983 issue of WT&T, I responded to a similar question regarding growth regulators available for use on St. Augustinegrass to reduce mowing frequency. For your convenience, I am reprinting that information below.

Mefluidide (Embark-25) has a label registration for use on St. Augustinegrass. Reports indicate that one application of Embark at a rate of one pint per acre in 15-150 gallons (depending on the application equipment) on St. Augustinegrass has provided growth suppression for eight weeks.

This material will inhibit cell division and cell elongation without affecting the root system. Ideally, the material should be applied when the grass is actively growing in spring and fall.

If the turf is irrigated, Embark can be used any time during the growing season. Depending on the stress condition, turf may show temporary discoloration in response to treatment.

For best results, apply the Embark when the turf grows a little taller than the normal mowing height or spray two to three days after mowing. After the application, wait for five to seven days and then mow if necessary. Follow normal turfgrass fertilization and conventional weed control programs along with irrigation.

It is important to apply the material uniformly; otherwise, the results will be variable.

Another product, maleic hydrazide (Retard) also has been used commercially for turfgrass maintenance; however, information on its use on St. Augustinegrass is lacking. Therefore, if you wish to use this product, first try it on a small test plot and study the growth response. For best results, read and follow the label specifications.

## Splitting bark a mystery

**Problem:** In reading your article in the April 1984 issue, I would also like to comment about winter damage. In the middle of July I lost a 3"-3 1/2" caliper *Salix babylonica* (Babylon Weeping Willow) and five of my *Salix matsudana tortuosa*, (Hankow Contorted Willow). The others have split their bark in several areas running from the base of the tree up to the first group of limbs, which varies from 6'-8' above ground.

I have contacted the county extension agent and he said since we had a bad winter, dry June and wet July that the trees just couldn't take the amount of moisture going into the tree. I have sprayed for insects and put pruning paint on the splits. I also did a soil sample. It is still a mystery to me about what's

*happened and would like more advice or any help on what to do. (Georgia)*

**Solution:** Most plants are sensitive to exposure to extremes in temperature and/or moisture. The type of injury(ies) and loss of plants you have observed could possibly be related to these abiotic factors alone or in combination with other biotic factors, such as disease or insects. We have seen extensive winter injury symptoms on a number of plants in many areas during the past several years. Based on these experiences and your county extension agent's diagnosis of the problem, I believe that the problem is related to winter injury.

Therefore, in addition to the treatment you have already done, consider pruning the dead portion of the trees, fertilize, and water the plants as needed to help improve vitality.

## Three to six week wait

**Problem:** How long should we wait to reseed a lawn after applying broadleaf herbicides? Secondly, how long should we delay broadleaf herbicide applications in a newly seeded area? (Michigan)

**Solution:** Generally, waiting for three to six weeks after broadleaf herbicide applications is sufficient to reseed the area. Reports indicate that with a splicer seeder, herbicides can be applied at or prior to seeding with no significant turfgrass reduction. Experience suggests that broadleaf herbicide applications should be delayed during establishment and at least until two to three mowing periods.

## Weed control for centipede sod

**Problem:** When and what is the best time to treat centipede sod for weed control? Also, what is the best treatment for wild turnips in centipede sod? (Alabama)

**Solution:** In your area, the best time for treating centipede sod for weed control would be in the spring and fall.

Broadleaf herbicides like Trimec containing 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba do not have preemergent activity. Therefore, for best results the weeds have to be present and, ideally, should be actively-growing when the application is made. On centipedegrass, use a bentgrass Trimec formula containing a low amount of 2,4-D.

To avoid potential injury to centipedegrass, do not use a regular Trimec formula which contains a higher rate of 2,4-D. For controlling wild turnip plants in centipede sod, use bentgrass Trimec in the spring, preferably before they bloom and again in the fall if the weeds are present. Read and follow label specifications for best results.