# PROBLEM SOLVERS

by **Balakrishna Rao**, Ph.D

## Removing annual grassy weeds

**Problem:** *Is there any product or practice which will: 1) remove weedy grasses from a blue/ryegrass lawn once they have germinated; and 2) remove bermudagrass at any time from blue/ryegrass lawns (poa annua and crabgrass excepted)? (California)*

**Solution:** If you are referring to annual grassy weeds, post-emergent products like DSMA, MSMA, or Daconate-6 can be used to manage weedy grasses after they have germinated. It is best to apply these products when seedlings are very young and are at the 2-3 leaf stage of development.

Other groups of grassy weeds in lawns include perennial plants like coarse or tall fescues and quackgrass. There is no herbicide to remove these on a selective basis. Non-selective herbicides such as Roundup can be used to manage them. These non-selective herbicides will kill any green vegetation which is contacted. Therefore, be careful in areas where it will be used. After the treatment, wait for 7-10 days and prepare the soil for seeding and seed the area with desirable grass mixtures.

Although it is not impossible, it is difficult to remove bermudagrass at any time from blue/ryegrass lawns. The best practice is to use Roundup and then seed the area with desirable turfgrass mixtures. Reports indicate that bermudagrass is a difficult grass to kill with one application of Roundup.

Therefore, repeat applications will be necessary until all the bermudagrass is killed. If the plants are already producing seeds, bagging them along with the clippings while mowing will help minimize the infestation in the future. Maintain good cultural practices to favor the establishment of desirable turfgrass which would gradually minimize bermudagrass infestation later on.

## Managing snow mold

**Problem:** *A number of our clients' lawns had snow mold disease problems in past years. What is the best way to manage these problems? (New York)*

**Solution:** Success in snow mold disease management depends upon proper diagnosis of the causal agents and following good management guidelines. Since we do not have a good broad-spectrum fungicide to manage all snow mold diseases, proper identification is very important when considering a fungicide treatment.

Several different fungal agents can cause turf diseases at low temperatures. Among these are pink snow mold (Fusarium patch) caused by *Fusarium nivale* and gray snow mold caused by *Typhula spp.*, which are the two most common and important snow mold diseases active during the winter months.

Pink snow mold is characterized by reddish-brown spots with pinkish colored margins. Pinkish mycelial growth may be present at the border of patches in early morning.

Gray snow mold has gray to black mycelium with hardened yellow-brown fungal bodies (sclerotia) embedded in the leaf and crown of infected plants.

Often snow mold problems can be managed successfully by following good cultural practices. Avoid producing lush growth by fertilizing in the fall. Continue mowing until turfgrass top growth stops. Manage the thatch problem if present.

Since the snow molds usually kill only the turfgrass leaves, rake and break up infected and matted leaves to encourage new tiller growth from the crown. This should be done before grass greenup in spring and prior to application of pre-emergent crabgrass herbicides.

Lawns with a history of snow mold disease severity can be treated with fungicides. General fungicide recommendations include one application before the first snow cover, the second application during mid-winter and the third application after the snow melts in the spring. Among these three applications, the one which is made in the fall before the snow cover is more beneficial and practical.

Chemical treatments in the spring—after the damage has been done—may not be very effective.

## Avoiding tree wounds

**Problem:** *In the past we have tried iron-container drilled holes. Is there something we can apply on tree foliage or treat through the soil for iron chlorosis without wounding the trees? (Michigan)*

**Solution:** Several companies market chelated forms of iron that are recommended for either foliar or soil application. Contact a horticultural supply service for products available in your area.

Based on our experience, soil applications of iron work best as preventative treatments for shade trees. We have not had consistent results with soil applications of chelated iron at recommended rates after chlorosis symptoms have developed. The leaves of some tree species do not respond to foliar treatments of iron. Therefore, we would suggest you try it on a small scale, perhaps spraying one branch.

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Questions should be mailed to Problem Solver, Weeds Trees & Turf, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.