

# PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

## To leave or not to leave

**Problem:** I've read opinions on leaving grass clippings on mowed lawns. Some people believe it's okay to leave clippings. But isn't that wrong because of disease development? What is your belief? (Washington)

**Solution:** Yes, I agree with your belief that if there is a potential for disease development, grass clippings should be removed. These leftover diseased portions can serve as the inoculum source for the future spread of the disease from one area to another.

It is important to recognize that having the diseased blades or fungal agent(s) alone is not enough to cause or spread the disease. For any disease to be active, three factors must be present: a susceptible plant (host), a virulent pathogen (agent) capable of causing a particular disease, and a favorable environment. Pathologists refer to this as a disease triangle. If any one of these is not present, a disease will not develop or establish.

Therefore, it is possible that even though a given disease was active in one month or in one season, as the temperature changes that particular disease may not continue to be active, even though the susceptible turfgrass and fungal agents are still present. However, the disease may become active in another time during the same or future growing season(s) if proper environmental conditions prevail.

In summary, the cultural practices and environmental conditions often contribute to pathological disorders. So, if there is a potential for disease development, it is advisable to remove clippings to help minimize the disease spread. If there is no evidence of any potential disease activity, then leaving the clippings would be beneficial if the turf is mowed regularly.

Contrary to common belief, grass clippings will not contribute to thatch development unless the clippings are too long. Clippings can supplement the soil nitrogen when they decompose and release nutrients. If the clippings are very long, decomposition may take a long time, which may contribute to thatch buildup.

## Shady cultivars

**Problem:** What cultivars of turfgrass require little or no sunlight? (Illinois)

**Solution:** There are a number of turfgrass cultivars which are adapted well to shade situations. The important thing is to determine the amount and duration of shade and light.

In the North, several Kentucky bluegrass cultivars, such as Bristol, Glade, Nugget, Touchdown and Birka, have shown good establishment under less than 70 percent shade. These cultivars would do better with more light. Areas with more than 70 to 80 percent shade, tall fescues and fine fescues have shown good establishment. If the shade is above 85 percent, it would be difficult to grow turfgrass.

Consider using some improved turf-type tall fescues such as Rebel II, Falcon, Mustang, Arid, Jaguar, Cimarron or Bonanza.

Some of the fine fescue varieties with good shade

and root competition, drought tolerance, and winter hardiness include: sheeps fescue (Bighorn), hard fescue (Biljart and Reliant), chewings fescue (Jamestown and Banner) and creeping fescue (Fortress, Ruby and Ensylva). These are some of the cultivars to choose from. Contact your local county extension office for any available list of turfgrass cultivars for shade.

## Getting the zoysia out

**Problem:** How do you go about removing zoysiagrass and keeping it out of a fescue lawn without causing damage to the fescue or soil? (Kansas)

**Solution:** I am not aware of any product which can be used to remove zoysiagrass selectively from a fescue lawn without causing damage to desirable turf. If you must get rid of zoysiagrass, the best approach would be to use Roundup to kill everything and start a new lawn.

Quite often it would be necessary to apply Roundup more than once before installing a new lawn if the undesirable grass continues to present problems. Zoysiagrass is an aggressive grass which multiplies by producing rhizomes, stolons and by tillering. Therefore, repeat applications may be necessary to manage this problem.

## Eliminating nutsedge hedging

**Problem:** Is there any weed control that will stop nutsedge? (Texas)

**Solution:** Basagran (Bentazon) is one of the effective herbicides used for yellow nutsedge control. Reports indicate that generally it may take three to five years to manage the nutsedge problem effectively. This is because of the way the plant grows. It produces underground bulbs which may not get affected with the first treatment. Therefore, repeat applications as needed when nutsedge presents a problem.

In the South, yellow nutsedge can emerge throughout the year, therefore can be treated any time.

Prograss EC herbicide will reduce competition from yellow and purple nutsedge. It is intended to be used on cool-season turfgrass like perennial rye, Kentucky bluegrass, and creeping bluegrass. To avoid injury to desirable warm-season turfgrass, spot-treat between December 1 and February 1. However, the results may vary depending upon the active weed growth and soil moisture.



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Questions should be mailed to Problem Management, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.