

Perennial weeds

We have had problems managing perennial weeds—such as poison ivy—by using Roundup herbicide. We apply Roundup in the spring, when other weeds and poison ivy begin to grow actively. We are not quite happy with the results. Is there something we are doing wrong, or is there a different way or time of the year to manage perennial weeds?

—SOUTH CAROLINA

People who have difficulty managing perennial weeds tend to question product performance. But problems may be related to: improper mixing rate, application coverage, equipment malfunctioning, equipment without a pressure regulator or flow meter to manage the flow rate, and proper timing. Among these, proper timing is the most critical factor.

Our experience suggests that late-summer or early fall application is better than a spring application to control poison ivy. Reports from the Georgia Extension Service indicate that Clemson University scientists found 20 percent control of poison ivy from May applications, 87 percent control from July applications, and 98 percent control from an August application. They also found similar results with other hard-to-control weeds, including yellow nutsedge.

It appears that timing may be your major problem. Mixing rates, application units and coverage also should be evaluated before your next application.

Fungus on mowers

Are there any solutions that can be applied to the undersides of lawn mowers to prevent fungus from building up? We scrape them clean every week, however still see a fungus buildup from wet grass.

—VIA E-MAIL

The fungal growth—moldy in appearance, with a decaying odor—is caused by saprophytes. These secondary fungi grown on dead and decaying organic matter like grass clippings. These saprophytes help the decomposition process. Generally, they are not considered to be harmful. However, some people may be allergic to the spores produced by these fungi. Therefore, while cleaning mower decks, it is a good idea for allergy-sensitive people to wear a dust mask to avoid inhaling fungal spores.

Maintain good sanitation, preferably cleaning the deck every day. Scrape off grass clippings and clean the mowers by using a water hose. In addition to this, you might also consider scrubbing with rubbing alcohol, diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) to kill the saprophyte fungal growth. Bleach mixtures are used to clean pots in greenhouses as well as disinfecting pruning tools. Bleach solution should remain on the mower deck surface for 10 minutes for better results. The solution should be thoroughly rinsed off to minimize corrosion. You can also try soaps or detergents like Comet or Ajax to reduce the saprophyte build-up.

Your best option is to mow when the turf is dry and clean the mower as often as possible with water (when feasible, use alcohol or Clorox) to prevent fungal growth build-up.

Slowing growth

Are there any products that we can use on hedge plants to slow their growth and reduce the need for pruning cycles? We are interested in managing the growth of plants like privet or honeysuckles.

—PENNSYLVANIA

Yes, there are a few products in the market which are labeled as plant growth regulators and should meet your needs. Such products are: Atrimmec, Embark 2-S, Trim-Cut ornamental growth regulator from PBI/Gordon Corp., and Maintain CF 125 from Uniroyal Co.

Most of the above-mentioned labels cover plants mostly from the southern or western plants of the United States. Therefore, refer to each label and be sure the specific plant or hedge is mentioned.

As a general rule, plant growth regulators are applied onto plants several days after they have been pruned. After treatment, these products slow growth from six to eight weeks.

As always, read and follow label specifications for best results. **LM**



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