

Field bindweed puts us in a bind

We have a serious problem with field bindweed growing in and around some plants in our client properties. How can we get rid of it without hurting the ornamental shrubs?

—MICHIGAN

Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) is a perennial weed that belongs to the sweet potato family. It has an underground root that's not unlike a sweet potato.

There are no selective herbicides to remove this weed. One option is to use non-selective products such as Roundup, Finale or Scythe as post-emergent treatments. These products will harm the desirable plants. Take care not to contact or touch the desirable plants while treating.

Try using a brush or wick for applications. This will be time consuming, but it's better than repeatedly hand weeding from an established ornamental planting.

Another option is to relandscape heavily infested areas. In this situation, the area to be landscaped can be pre-treated with one of the existing bindweed treatments. Then bring in plant materials free from bindweed. Select plants from nurseries that have good sanitation practices.

Why disinfect tools?

We were in a situation where an elm tree had several branches showing "flagging" symptoms of Dutch elm disease. Our supervisor insisted

we disinfect tools while making cuts within the same tree. Why?

—NEW YORK

The main objective of disinfecting pruning tools is to sanitize the tools to prevent or minimize spreading the disease. While pruning branches of the same tree that show "flagging" symptoms, some judgment is required. Depending on the extent of the flagging and/or browning of foliage in the canopy and the source of infection, disinfecting tools may or may not be helpful.

Generally, the flagging symptoms are the result of fungal infection spread by bark beetle feeding activity. The European bark beetles feed in the smaller branch junctions and spread the fungus. In this situation, it is a good idea to disinfect to prevent further spread. However, if infection occurs through root grafting, disinfecting tools may be of little value. In my opinion, if in doubt, disinfect. It's a good sanitation practice to help prevent the spread of fungus that causes Dutch elm disease.

Weed resistance in home lawns

We are having a problem managing common broadleaf weeds, such as dandelion or plantain, in some lawns but not others. It's a problem in lawns with a thin grass stand. Are these weeds developing a resistance?

—MICHIGAN

The reason why you may be having weeds in some lawns and not in others may be related to "thin" lawns. Any open areas or

a thin stand of turfgrass can allow weeds to germinate and eventually establish. Weed seeds can remain viable in soil for a long period (10 to 20 years). In addition, weed seeds can be carried by wind from nearby untreated areas. Weeds are opportunist pests that establish in areas where there is no competition. They compete for the same water, nutrients and space that are necessary for desirable turfgrass. If the turfgrass stand is thin or the turfgrass is not aggressive like Kentucky bluegrass, the area may not fill in very quickly. This is particularly true with bunch-type grass, such as tall fescue or ryegrass.

Your program and the products you use may be effective; however, if the lawn is thin as described above, weeds can germinate from seeds and establish and present a problem from time to time. In this situation, consider over-seeding the thin lawns with aggressive turfgrass and cultivars. Provide good cultural practices for faster filling in competing with weeds.

While managing weeds, it is important to make sure that the target weeds are present and actively growing. Quite often, if the weeds are not actively growing, they will not absorb the product and translocate it to the root system. I am not familiar with any reports suggesting resistance to lawn applied herbicides. With granular products, an application made when leaf surfaces are moist or wet gives better results. **LM**



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