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SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO:

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Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.

Dallisgrass control

I have noticed a lot of dallisgrass coming in lawns. Where does this grass come from? What product do you know that might kill the seed and the plant?

—WEST VIRGINIA

Reportedly an introduced grass native to Uruguay and Argentina, dallisgrass (*Paspalum dilatatum*) may be coming from nearby lawns, pastures, roadsides or ditchbanks.

Dallisgrass is a tufted, summer-growing perennial grass that grows from a hardy crown. It can rapidly produce flower heads over nicely mowed lawns.

Consider using herbicides such as Roundup, Finale, DSMA or MSMA. You may also want to overseed with desirable turfgrass seeds after spot treating with herbicides. However, damage to untreated areas may occur if you walk from treated turf onto untreated turf.

Many of the pre-emergent herbicides used for crabgrass control also will help manage dallisgrass. In the pasture areas either rotate with cultivated crops, dig the plant or spot treat with Roundup or Finale. Reseed the areas with desirable plants.

The root of the problem

We have an extensive population of Northwest poplars and elms. Surface roots are damaging our mowers. To what extent can these roots be lowered or even eliminated without causing a great deal of damage to the trees?

— ALBERTA, CANADA

Generally I would not advise anyone to prune surface roots as this may not help alleviate the surface rooting problem. This practice will damage the tree and may cause it to die.

While some tree species are more prone to having shallow roots, trees will produce surface roots if the growing conditions are not favorable for proper root development. Waterlogged, heavy clay or compacted soils may be causes.

Tree roots require sufficient amounts of oxygen and water so the roots grow where the soil has the conditions necessary for growth and, in these situations, that is at the soil surface.

You can consider adding a small amount of topsoil (1 to 1.5 inches) and a small amount of mulch (another 1 to 2 inches), and keep it from touching the base of the tree. This will reduce the severity of the visual problem and mowing will no longer be required near the tree trunks thus reducing damage to your mowers.

One final note, having damaged your mowers in this situation, it is possible that the trees have been damaged. Root rot and decay in the roots affect tree stability and increase the possibility of breakage in high loading situations. Trees that have had repeated severe damage to their roots should be inspected by a professional arborist familiar with hazard tree identification to evaluate their condition with respect to the potential targets.

Herbicide movement

Can lawn-applied broadleaf herbicides and pre-emergent crabgrass herbicide leach in the soil?

—PENNSYLVANIA

There are several factors that dictate or determine the leaching of herbicides. These include soil texture, how well the herbicide dissolves in water, attraction of ions or molecules of herbicides to soil colloids (a process called adsorption) and the amount of available water.

Herbicides, such as salt forms of 2,4-D which adsorb less to soil colloids, have a tendency to leach readily in sandy or silt-loam soils. The dinitroaniline herbicides and many pre-emergent herbicides can readily adsorb to soil colloids and thus resist leaching. Reports indicate that the pre-emergent herbicide Dacthal can leach slightly in soil.

Many herbicides bind to the organic matter and clay in soils. Adsorption is poor if the soil contains too much sand or silt. Increase organic matter in the soil to increase adsorption and decrease leaching.

Herbicide leaching is usually not a concern if the applications were made per label specifications and guidelines, particularly in lawns with good organic matter. Often a herbicide-treated and an untreated lawn can be side by side without any weeds in the treated side and many weeds on the untreated side. This suggests that the herbicides did not move or leach laterally to the untreated area. **LM**