

MCGOUGH'S, INC.

A Traverse City Centennial Store



Crabgrass Control

Crabgrass Characteristics

If the snow has just melted and you see green, weedy grasses in your lawn, you're not looking at crabgrass. Many other weedy grasses are confused with crabgrass, which is a summer annual that dies every year, but not



before producing copious amounts of seed at the end of its life cycle. Crabgrass germinates in the spring after soil temperatures reach 60 degrees at a 1" depth. And remember, that's

soil temperature, not air. It thrives during hot, dry summers—conditions which stress our cool-season desirable turf grasses. It is generally found in full sun and in the “hot spots”, along driveways, sidewalks or weakened areas of the lawn. Crabgrass tolerates mowing and will produce seeds that stay viable in the soil for years.

Prevention is usually the key to effective control of crabgrass in the lawn. A combination of proper mowing, regular fertilizations, and preemergent use can dramatically reduce crabgrass infestations in turf. Knowing what products to use and when to apply them, however, can be confusing.

Timing is Essential

Because of national product marketing and misidentification, people in our area often assume that they should apply crabgrass preemergents as soon the snow melts. In a typical spring, that might prove to be a waste of time and money—the product would likely break down before the crabgrass could even germinate. One way to determine the approximate soil temp and therefore the best time to apply is to observe the for-

sythia, which functions as an excellent indicator plant. When forsythias are in full bloom, soil temps have reached 50–55 degrees; preventative products applied right before petal drop



will have a longer window of control. These preemergent herbicides are available with or without fertilizer. In areas of previous heavy infestation, a second application of preemergent four to six weeks later is often a wise idea. When choosing a product, look for one of these effective herbicides:

- ◆ *Prodiamine* - the longest lasting crabicide
- ◆ *Dithiopyr* - can also kill young crabgrass up to the 3-leaf stage

While preventative herbicides are preferred, you can still kill crabgrass after it has germinated without killing your lawn. Look for products containing *quinclorac* and ensure you follow label directions.

Check out www.turf.msu.edu
Detailed, easy-to-understand articles and excellent identification tools for a variety of lawn care topics.

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