

Ag Column
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Early Spring Gets a Reality Check

Seventy degree temperatures flipped Mother Nature's switch several weeks ago. We saw crocus, daffodils, and forsythia blooming. Forsythia, the yellow-blooming shrub, is the signal we look for each year to know when soil temperatures have warmed enough for warm season annuals like crabgrass to germinate.

Many reported seeing forsythia blooming in very early February and maybe even late January. As many have predicted, we are now seeing the "lion-like" March we might expect after such a warm February. Due to the seasonably cold temperatures we are now seeing, we've hit the brakes on the coming of spring.

If you thought you waited too late to apply your crabgrass pre-emergent, you now have a new opportunity. With the below freezing temperatures, any germinated crabgrass is now "toast" for sure. Apply a crabgrass pre-emergent now and it should be very effective. If you get busy and forget, then you can apply dithiopyr (Dimension) up to the 3 to 4 leaf stage for crabgrass.

You can gain control of cool season weeds such as dandelion, plantain, and thistle by applying herbicides in March. Plan to apply herbicides prior to bloom for an effective kill. For lawns, I recommend using a foliar-applied material to get the best control. Granular materials often fall to soil surface rendering them ineffective for control of weeds like dandelion. For agricultural field applications, we would recommend a 2,4-D Ester formulation through early spring. As the rhyme goes, use Ester before Easter and Amine after Easter.

For all cool season weed control applications, you should always plan to apply herbicides following 3 to 4 days of 60 F. This allows cool season weeds to be in a stage of growth. If cool season weeds are hardened off or more dormant, herbicides will not be effective. Always use a recommended rate according to the label in 20 to 30 gallons of water per acre. You should also use a surfactant at the rate of 1 quart per 100 gallons of spray mixture.

So, take advantage of this second chance to control crabgrass in your lawn. You also still have time to target cool season weed applications prior to bloom. You may call your local Extension office for specific weed control recommendations.