

Ag Column
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Great Opportunity to Control Weeds in Late Fall

With many challenges in 2020, we have had an awesome fall with great soil moisture and mild temperatures. As the growing, gardening, lawn mowing, and harvest season is ending, there's still a great opportunity to improve our turf grasses, pastures, and hayfields. Cool-season weeds are very easily controlled in November to December.

If you remember seeing blooming weeds this past spring, then now is the time to control those weeds. Weed control applications must target the young growing stage of weeds to achieve optimum control due to the herbicide chemistry. Once weeds enter the reproductive phase and produce seeds, broadleaf herbicides are ineffective in most situations.

One good example of a weed that can be controlled this time of year is plantain, which occurs as buckhorn plantain and broadleaf plantain. These are most noticeable in their reproductive stage in the summer when they are bolting and producing seed, but now is best time for chemical control. These weeds can be found in both farm fields and home lawns.

Buckhorn plantain is a cool season perennial weed. Achieving good control of broadleaf weeds usually requires spraying the herbicide when the weed is in a vegetative growth stage. Broadleaf herbicides take advantage of the active growth period of the weeds to enhance the mode of action required to control the weed. So make sure the weed is growing when you spray. Once the weed has bloomed, broadleaf herbicides are mostly ineffective.

The best timing for broadleaf plantain is November and March since it is a cool season weed. Spraying in November and following up with another application if needed in March minimizes the chances of the weed producing seed the following summer.

Some weeds will require a broader spectrum herbicide like GrazonNext or Duracor, but 2,4-D Ester will control plantain. The broad spectrum herbicides would be best if you have multiple species to control. In a home lawn, a three-way herbicide will be the best option.

You will need to wait for warm temperatures for the weeds to absorb and effectively mobilize the herbicide. You need 3 days of 60 F before spraying the herbicide.

In most cases, you will kill your clover when you control broadleaf weeds. The best recommendation is to spray your fields until broadleaf weeds are under control and then re-establish your clover.

For more information and a specific application rate, you should always read the herbicide label. For more information on sprayer calibration, application timing, and herbicide mixing, contact your local Extension Office.