



Fall – Best Time for Weed Control

Now is the prime time to control broadleaf weeds. Fall always has been and always will be the best time. Good perennial weed control can be obtained with fall, and late fall weed sprays. Late fall sprays can be done in late November and even early December in some years. For extremely late applications the recommendation is to use Ester formulations.

Why Do Fall Applications Work

In the fall soil temperatures remain warm, even though air temperatures can get quite cool. Weeds are still making carbohydrates and translocating them to the root to store as food. When herbicides are applied to the foliage in the fall, they are absorbed by the leaves. They then move downward to the root where they cause rapid cell division and elongation. If enough herbicide is taken to the root, the plant cannot make enough carbohydrates to support this cell growth. Even if weeds with a large root mass are not completely killed in the fall, they are weakened. They then are easily controlled with a follow-up spring application. In the spring, the opposite phenomenon exists. Soils are cold, and the plant is translocating carbohydrates up to make new leaves. When spring applications are made, often the leaf tissue is killed, but the plant has enough stored food reserves to re-sprout underground buds and grow new leaves and stems.

Weeds Best Controlled With Fall Sprays

Late fall applications work best on perennial weeds and winter annuals. The “big three” are most easily controlled in the fall; dandelion, clover, and ground ivy. Wild violet is best sprayed in the fall but may require two applications or a follow-up spring shot.

Most winter annuals germinate in the fall. The ones that do can be controlled then. Early fall applications will also control existing summer annuals like spurge and oxalis, but they may have already produced seed that will germinate the following summer.

How Late Is Too Late for Fall Sprays

It is virtually impossible to pick a date on the calendar. Every year is different. Any time soil temperatures are above 50F or 55F, at one inch depth, excellent weed control can be obtained using Amine formulations. Soil temperatures in our area often remain this warm right up to “turkey day”; Thanksgiving. When soil temperatures approach 50F or lower, ester formulations should be used. Don’t expect to see a dramatic twisting of the leaves, with late fall applications. Often, the weed leaves will turn red, purple or yellow. The weed foliage may still be apparent in the early spring, but the turf (grass) will readily fill in. Remember, we are killing the roots!

Can Fall Seeded Pasture Be Treated

Much of the turf in the Midwest was thinned this season by the hot dry weather. By now your pasture seed should have been planted. Fall seeding and fall herbicide applications are compatible! Grass seeded in late August or early September may be sprayed in late October or November. This assumes conditions have favored germination and growth of the newly seeded turf. The rule of thumb, for the newly seeded lawn, the new grass should have been mowed two to three times before applying any herbicide. In the pasture let your new seed grow from four to six weeks, mow the new grass to a height from four to six inches, and then spray your weeds. Early fall applications of broadleaf herbicide can also be made in early September and wait 3-weeks to seed.

Summary

Fall is the best time of year to control most broadleaf weeds. Applications can be successfully made much later than many people think.

2, 4-D is an active ingredient in many herbicides. It is used to control broadleaf weeds in selected crop, range, turf, and landscape areas. 2, 4-D is available in “ester” and “amine” formulations. Esters vaporize readily and result in vapor drift which can travel long distances. Volatilization can occur when air temperatures reach or exceed 85F. The ester formulation is more effective in cool to cold weather because its penetrating affects the leaf cuticle. The amine salt formulation is non-volatile. During warm weather (temperatures above 85F) only amine formulations of 2, 4-D should be used. Amine rates are usually higher than ester rates to compensate for reduced absorption.

Ester formulations for pasture and range are:

- Cleanout (Clear Pasture)
- LV 400

Amine formulations for pasture and range are:

- Hi-Dep
- Pasture Pro

Several factors influence the effectiveness of post-emergence herbicide applications. Control is easiest to achieve when the weed is small, healthy, and actively growing. As weeds age, changes in the leaf surface, growth habit, and physiological functions occur. These changes result in reduced herbicide uptake and translocation. Herbicides are a useful tool for controlling weeds, but they only provide short-term relief. The best approach is to use an integrated system which includes; proper seeding, good fertilizing plan, cool season forages, and rotational grazing practices.



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