Know Your Weeds and How to Eliminate Them by Sandy Cotton-Jones

Dandelion

The dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) is a troublesome weed in bluegrass lawns throughout the transition zone. Although it is found in every southern state, it is most troublesome in the cooler regions where it persists year-round. The bright yellow flower of the dandelion appears from early spring through summer in the transition zone where it contrasts sharply with the color and texture of turfgrasses. In the Gulf States the flowering period ends in late spring.

**Description.** The dandelion is a perennial plant with a deep, thick taproot. A rosette of basal leaves emerge from the crown of the plant. The leaves are long, narrow, deeply notched with backward pointed lobes. The leaves and flower stalk contain a milk-like juice. Flower stalks are slender and terminate in a single flower. The flower is 1 to 1° inches across and consists of bright yellow to orange-yellow petals. The flower head is surrounded by narrow pointed bracts with the outer ones curved backwards. The seeds are brown, -inch long, narrow, with a parachute-like pappus attached to a long beak at the upper end. The dandelion flowers from April through June and seed mature and disperse quickly after the bloom appears.

**Control.** Dandelions are readily controlled by 2,4-D, or products containing 2,4-D, if applications are made in fall or early spring before the plants begin to flower. After flowering begins, 2,4-D will twist and curl the leaves and flower stalks, but the plants often survive the treatment.

Burweed

Burweed or lawn burweed (*Soliva* spp.), a cool season annual introduced from South America, has become a nuisance on golf courses, athletic fields, parks and lawns throughout much of Texas and the Southwest. The weed becomes a real nuisance when the seed matures in the spring because the sharply pointed spines on the seed can easily pierce the skin. Burweed becomes a deterrent to the use of athletic fields, parks and playgrounds in the spring when the seed mature. On golf courses, burweed invades even the most closely mowed putting greens as well as fairways, tees and roughs.

**Description.** Burweed is a small, low-growing annual plant. In an unmowed site, it only reaches 2 inches in height and the individual plants may spread out to about 6 inches in diameter. Leaves are pinnately divided giving the plant a feathery appearance. The seed enclosures are flattened, callous structures terminating in teeth on spines.

Burweed emerges in early fall and matures in the spring. The vegetative part of the plant dries up in May and the seeds remain to germinate the next fall. Populations of the weed may become so high that plants cover the ground like a carpet, thus, the name "carpet burweed." Where grassy weeds such as annual bluegrass are eliminated by the use of preemerge herbicides, populations of burweed increase dramatically in following years.

**Control.** Like most broadleaf weeds, burweed is easily controlled in the seedling stage with hormone-type herbicides. Products containing 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba will control burweed in the seedling stage.

Preemerge herbicides are generally not effective for burweed control. In fact, burweed populations increase where
preemerge herbicides reduce the competition. Simazine and atrazine are exceptions in that they effectively control burweed.

**Clovers (White Clover, Burclover)**

Several species of clover are troublesome in turfgrass since they develop dense patches of lush vegetation that compete with grasses in the early spring. White clover is a desirable species in pastures and rangelands as it provides nutritious forage and adds nitrogen to the soil. White clover is a perennial plant in areas where summer rainfall is adequate. In other areas it reestablishes each fall from seed. Burclover is an annual plant with little forage value.

**Description.** White clover (*Trifolium repens*), also called "Dutch clover", is a perennial, mat-forming herbaceous plant with a creeping stem that roots at the nodes. Leaves are trifoliate with long, erect petioles; leaflets are widely elliptic with toothed margins and usually with a white splotch near the base of the upper surface. Blooms are a spherical cluster of white or pinkish flowers that develop on long stalks. Flower clusters are about 1 inch wide and appear slightly above the leaves. Plants bloom from March to October. Seeds are kidney-shaped or circular in outline and reddish brown in color with a smooth surface.

Burclover (*Medicago* spp.) is an annual species whose vegetative characteristics are similar to white clover. In place of the whitish splotches on the upper leaf surfaces characteristic of white clover, burclover has purplish markings (spotted burclover) or no distinct markings. Flowers develop in small clusters and the yellow petals fall soon after blooming. Seed develop in pods, usually in clusters, with a double row of soft spines forming the bur. Burclover blooms from March through May.

**Control.** Clover can be controlled preemerge in warm season turfgrasses with simazine (Princep) or isoxaben (Gallery). Postemerge, both white clover and burclover can be controlled with hormone products such as Confront (triclopyr and clopyralid), MCPP (Chipco Turf Herbicide MCPP), dicamba (Banvel), 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba (Trimec), 2,4-D and dichlorprop (Weedone DPC) and 2,4-D and triclopyr (Turflon II Amine).

**Henbit**

Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) is a cool season, annual broadleaf weed. Seedlings begin to emerge in early fall and grow throughout the fall, winter and spring. Henbit can dominate turfgrass in the spring throughout the southern region.

Although henbit is not known for any herbal or medicinal purposes, this plant is used in flower arrangements because of its unusual leaf shape and arrangement.

**Description.** Henbit, a member of the mint family, has characteristic square stems. Stems are slender, ascending or prostrate, and freely branched at the base. Stems may root at the lower nodes. Leaves are opposite, nearly circular, deeply veined, hairy and petioled. Upper leaves clasp the stem and the lower leaves are distinctly petioled. Roots are shallow and fibrous.

Flowers, conspicuous in early spring, are tubular, pink to purple, and borne in the leaf axile. Seeds are borne in a pod.

**Control.** Henbit is most effectively controlled with herbicides in the fall while plants are small and immature. Products containing dicamba, MCPP and 2,4-D have demonstrated effective control in the fall and early spring. In dormant bermudagrass, glyphosate, diquat or metribuzin will control henbit.

If applied prior to germination, products such as surflan, bensulide, pendimethalin and simazine also provide good control of henbit. Follow label directions on all products recommended for henbit to obtain the best control.
Prostrate or Spotted Spurge

Prostrate spurge (*Euphorbia supina*) and spotted spurge (*E. maculata*) are warm season annual weeds found throughout the southeastern states. Both species have a rather deep taproot, are freely branching and form a circular mat or clump several inches to several feet in diameter. Both species produce abundant seed that germinate throughout the summer and readily invade turf and ornamental plantings.

**Description.** Leaves are opposite, ovate to oblong, slightly serrated, sparsely pubescent with a tinge of red or purple in the center. A milky latex drips from cut leaves, stems or roots of both plants. In an unmowed location, spotted spurge develops a more erect plant than prostrate spurge. Also, seedlings of the spotted spurge have a pink or green stem.

Like most broadleaved weeds, spurge is most susceptible to postemerge herbicides when plants are in the seedling or immature stage.

Mature plants are quite tolerant to most herbicides.

Spurge begins to germinate in late spring and continues to emerge throughout the summer. Controls are most effective when applied in early summer. A second application may be required 4 to 6 weeks after the initial application to control new seedlings.

**Control.** Products such as dicamba and Trimec provide good control of immature spurge plants, but only fair control of mature plants. These products can be used on most turfgrasses. In bermudagrass turf, MSMA can be used for postemerge control of spurge.

Dacthal, pendimethalin and Surflan have provided good preemerge control of spurge in warm season turfgrasses. To be effective, they must be applied in early spring prior to germination of weeds at recommended rates of application. A second application may be required 60 days after the initial application to provide season-long control of spurge.

Yellow Woodsorrel

Yellow woodsorrel (*Oxalis stricta*), also commonly called oxalis or sheep sorrel, is a spring or summer annual weed throughout the south, mid-west and eastern states. Yellow woodsorrel is a problem weed found in lawns as well as in ornamental plantings. In lawns, the weed develops a creeping growth habit often rooting at the nodes of low growing stems. In ornamental beds or gardens the plant develops an upright or bushy growth habit.

**Description.** Yellow woodsorrel leaves are divided into 3 heart-shaped leaflets, green to purplish in color, with long petioles attached to a weak, branching stem. Stems may be prostrate or erect up to 50 cm tall. Plants have a taproot, but some species spread by weak rhizomes.

Flowers of yellow woodsorrel have 5 bright yellow petals and are about 2 cm wide. Flowers develop in clusters in an unequally branched umbel. Seed develops in a slender capsule 5 to 15 mm long with 5 ridges and a pointed tip. Mature seed scatter several feet when the capsule bursts.

**Control.** Yellow woodsorrel is most effectively controlled by preemerge herbicides such as dacthal, oryzalin (Surflan), pendimethalin (Pre-M), isoxaben (Gallery), dithiopyr (Dimension) and oxadiazon (Ronstar). Preemerge products must be applied in early spring for effective control of early emerging weeds. Repeat applications may be needed with some
products to obtain season long control.

Yellow woodsorrel is resistant to post emergent products such as 2,4-D and MCPP. Postemerge products containing dichlorprop (Weedone DPC) and triclopyr (Turflon D) are effective on yellow woodsorrel if applied early postemerge. Repeat applications may be required to control more mature plants.

Know Your Weeds and How to Eliminate Them

A warm winter and wet spring have set the stage for weed-infested yards. Here in the Village, we find a representative of every weed group.

Dandelions are EVERY WHERE! Guess what? They live year-round in warm climates and adapt their height to escape mowing.

Bindweeds, Creeping Charlie, Henbit, Purslane, Speedwell, and Spurge form mats that choke and shade grass (kill it). Some are cute low lying plants with sweet yellow or white flowers. Some root after mowing spreads them throughout your yard. One almost all of us have to some degree looks like a small clover with yellow flowers. It produces burrs (think of your childhood socks) at the end of one growing cycle, which is quickly followed by another cycle. After two cycles, the ground beneath the plant appears dark brown. None of this category is harmless!

Crabgrass is partial to bare, weak areas like those left by the matting plants. Plus, it’s fast growing.

Dallisgrass, Johnson Grass, and Goose Grass grow in ever growing circles. Dallisgrass is fond of wet areas, like between our houses, while Johnson and Goose Grass love hot, dry, compacted soil. All three have very strong, expansive roots and must be removed chemically or by hand.

Fortunately, all of the above can be controlled and/or eliminated by application of pre-emergent in the early Spring and late Fall. Oops! We’re too late for Spring, but we can put this on our calendars for Fall. A product called Weed Stop for Lawns can be used in late Spring or until daytime temperatures reach 85F. So, let’s keep this in mind for next season.

Unfortunately, all of the above weeds can out-compete the lawns in our hot, dry area. Tolerating any of these weeds could result in a dead or dying lawn too weak to survive winter. Even in thick, healthy yards, they move quickly to take advantage of lawns not fertilized and watered regularly. Unless you prefer to treat, till, and reseed a new lawn next Spring, consider using one of the following products recommended by experts at Lowes: (both can be used in our high temperatures and both require a tank for application)

Image - 24 oz. $18.97 – recommended as best of the two.
Green Light – 1 Qt $13.97