

Timely Turfgrass Memo

Spring 2025 - FAQs



Dr. Becky Bowling - *Asst. Prof & Extension Specialist*

Dr. Jim Brosnan - *Professor & Extension Specialist*

Greg Breeden - *Extension Specialist*

Celeste Scott - *Extension Specialist*

HELPFUL RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED:

- [Welcome Home](#)
- [UTHort](#)
- Turfgrass Selection
 - [Fescues](#)
 - [Zoysiagrass](#)
 - [Bermudagrass](#)
- [W 1068 - Lawn and Landscape Weed Control for Homeowners](#)
- [W239 - Removing Overseeded Perennial Ryegrass from Bermudagrass Turf](#)
- [W 146 Crabgrass Species Control in Turfgrass](#)
- **Mobile Weed Manual**
 - **Note:** A ***NEW*** version of this app has launched. This new version (1.15.1) contains:
 - New herbicide offerings that entered the turf and ornamental market in 2024
 - New herbicide offerings that entered the turf and ornamental market in 2025
 - Numerous options for herbicides included on fertilizer carriers
 - The new version can be accessed online at mobileweedmanual.com and downloaded for use on mobile devices.
 - Update for Apple via the [App Store](#)
 - Update for Android via [Google Play](#)

SPRING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. [IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO PLANT OR RESEED MY COOL-SEASON LAWN?](#)
2. [WHEN IS IT TOO LATE TO APPLY MY SPRING PREEMERGENCE HERBICIDE \(I.E., WEED PREVENTER\)?](#)
3. [HOW LATE CAN COMMERCIAL CLIENTELE USE GLYPHOSATE TO CONTROL WEEDS IN BERMUDAGRASS?](#)
4. [SHOULD I SCALP MY LAWN FOR SPRING? WHAT HEIGHT SHOULD I BE MOWING MY LAWN AT?](#)
5. [HOW SHOULD I ADVISE CLIENTS ON TRANSITIONING FROM OVERSEEDED RYEGRASS TO BERMUDAGRASS?](#)
6. [WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT LEFTOVER POA ANNUA AND OTHER WINTER WEEDS?](#)
7. [WHEN SHOULD I START FERTILIZING MY LAWN?](#)
8. [WHAT LAWN DISEASES SHOULD I BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR?](#)
9. [I'M CONSIDERING WARM-SEASON TURFGRASS - SHOULD I PLANT ZOYSIAGRASS OR BERMUDAGRASS?](#)

? IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO PLANT OR RESEED MY COOL-SEASON LAWN?

- Spring seeding is possible but not ideal—**fall remains the preferred time for establishing cool-season grasses** (i.e., fescue) due to more favorable growing conditions. Spring-seeded areas face greater competition from weeds and may struggle to establish before summer heat arrives. While practitioners can seed now to address thinning areas, **results may be inconsistent**, and additional seeding will likely be needed in the fall.
- **Sodding is the best option** for spring establishment of cool-season grasses if feasible.
- If seeding now, ensure adequate water access, as rising temperatures increase the risk of drought stress.
- **Preemergence herbicides can hinder seedling establishment.** If clientele choose to seed or reseed, they should avoid applying preemergence herbicides this spring until the new grass is fully established. Most preemergent herbicides cannot be used for two to six months after seeding—always follow product label instructions.

? WHEN IS IT TOO LATE TO APPLY MY SPRING PREEMERGENCE HERBICIDE (I.E., WEED PREVENTER)?



Fig. 1, Crabgrass (*Digitaria* spp.); Credit: J. Brosnan

- Spring preemergence herbicides should ideally be applied **before soil temperatures consistently reach 55°F** at a 2-inch depth for several consecutive days (ambient temperatures averaging around 65°F or above). While temperatures continue to fluctuate, crabgrass (Fig 1) has likely already germinated in many areas of the state.
- Although the optimal window for preemergence crabgrass control may have passed in many regions, **applying a preemergence herbicide can still be beneficial.** Many other weeds germinate later or continue emerging throughout the season, making preventative treatment worthwhile.
- To maximize effectiveness, practitioners should consider using pre-mixed products or tank mixes that **combine preemergent (residual) and postemergent activity.** This approach targets immature summer annuals while they are most vulnerable in addition to weeds that have not yet emerged.
- Certain preemergence herbicide chemistries, such as dithiopyr (trade name Dimension), may also provide early postemergence control of crabgrass while offering residual activity against seeds that have yet to germinate.

? HOW LATE CAN COMMERCIAL CLIENTELE USE GLYPHOSATE TO CONTROL WEEDS IN BERMUDAGRASS?

- In most parts of the state, **it is now too late to apply glyphosate safely** without risking injury to bermudagrass. Dry conditions may have delayed green-up despite warmer temperatures, but recent rainfall has triggered bermudagrass growth.
- Glyphosate is safest when applied during full dormancy, typically in winter. As spring approaches, monitor for signs of green-up—if more than **20-30% of the turf canopy** has green leaf tissue, injury is likely.

Note on zoysiagrass: Some clientele also inquire about glyphosate use on dormant or semi-dormant zoysiagrass. Recent research conducted at Virginia Tech has shown that zoysiagrass can respond differently to herbicide applications during dormancy based on its variety, species, location, environmental conditions, and the timing of post-dormancy growth. To reduce the risk of significant damage, **experts recommend applying glyphosate before reaching 200 growing degree days (base 5°C) and glufosinate before 125 growing degree days.** Additionally, studies have found that stolons (horizontal stems) located beneath the grass canopy absorb more herbicide than the leaves. To minimize unintended injury to zoysiagrass while still effectively controlling weeds, turf managers can adjust their application methods by **avoiding induction-type nozzles, raising the spray boom height, and reducing the carrier volume.**

? SHOULD I SCALP MY LAWN FOR SPRING? WHAT HEIGHT SHOULD I BE MOWING MY LAWN AT?

- Scalping (removing excess dormant growth) in the early spring can benefit warm-season grasses like **bermudagrass and zoysiagrass** by promoting quicker green-up and aiding in thatch removal, but it's not necessary for all lawns and can come with risks.
- **If you choose to scalp, scalp bermudagrass and zoysiagrass in early spring** when the risk of frost has passed, and bag the clippings to prevent smothering new growth. Be aware that this may increase weed pressure by increasing soil exposure to sunlight.
- In general, **spring mowing heights can be a bit shorter than summer mowing heights.** As temperatures progressively warm, mowing heights should be increased to encourage deeper root growth. Low-input lawns will generally benefit from taller mowing heights.

	Spring	Summer	Fall
Tall Fescue & Fescue Blends	~2.5 - 4"	~3 - 5"	~2.5 - 4"
Bermudagrass Lawns	~1.5 - 2"	~2 - 3.5"	~2 - 3.5"
Zoysiagrass Lawns	~1.5 - 2"	~2 - 2.5"	~2 - 2.5"



? HOW SHOULD I ADVISE CLIENTS ON TRANSITIONING FROM OVERSEEDED RYEGRASS TO BERMUDAGRASS?

- To maintain optimal bermudagrass performance during summer, it's essential to chemically remove overseeded perennial ryegrass in late spring. Failure to do so can compromise bermudagrass stand health and lead to "clumpy ryegrass," which is unsightly and poses safety hazards on athletic fields.
- **Do not use glyphosate for this purpose.** While glyphosate is sometimes used for early spring cleanup applications in warm-season turfgrass, it is not an effective option for removing overseeded perennial ryegrass. Other herbicides will be more efficacious. Further, chemical transitions typically occur at or after the start of bermudagrass green-up, increasing the risk of unintended injury to the desired turf.
- Various herbicides, such as Certainty, Katana, Kerb, Manor, Monument, Revolver, and Negate, are labeled for removing overseeded perennial ryegrass. The speed of transition varies among these products, with some newer sulfonyleurea herbicides acting faster than older ones. Refer to [Removing Overseeded Perennial Ryegrass from Bermudagrass Turf](#) for additional guidance.
- **Gradually lower mowing height** to reduce ryegrass competition and allow more sunlight to reach the bermudagrass.
- **Apply a light dose of nitrogen** (0.25–0.5 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft.) as bermudagrass begins to green up to support growth.

? WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT LEFTOVER POA ANNUA AND OTHER WINTER WEEDS?

- Winter annual weeds like *Poa annua* and broadleaf species typically germinate in late summer to early fall, grow through the winter, and flower in spring. **As these plants mature and begin to flower, postemergence herbicide control becomes significantly less effective.** While products labeled for *Poa annua* and winter annual broadleaf weeds can help manage late-season escapes, many homeowners are just now noticing them and asking about control options—often when it's more difficult to achieve satisfactory results.
- **Start by managing expectations.** Explain that herbicides will only be so effective once plants enter the flowering stage, as it becomes more challenging for herbicides to effectively cover, penetrate and translocate in more mature weeds that are nearing death. Herbicides can be applied but may have mixed results. Caution should be used to not select or apply products that may interfere with or delay green-up of desirable turfgrass species. Use the mobile weed manual for support with herbicide selection.
- As an action item, **encourage clientele to note where infestations have occurred** so that they can target those areas with preemergent and early postemergence herbicide applications next fall.
- **Mechanical removal (hand-pulling) may be necessary** in areas with heavy infestations, especially where chemical options are limited. Placing plastic bags over weeds before pulling them up can reduce the spread of seed during removal.
- **Mow and bag clippings** in an attempt to remove flowers and seed and reduce spread. Be mindful of how trafficking areas where seed have shattered will increase the likelihood of spreading seed to new areas.

? WHEN SHOULD I START FERTILIZING MY LAWN?

- **Use a soil test** to determine nutrient and liming needs and apply fertilizer accordingly to prevent excess runoff and environmental impact. This is true for all nutrients aside from nitrogen which is applied based on species and use.
- Apply fertilizers **only when turfgrass is actively growing**.
- **Warm-season grasses** (bermudagrass, zoysiagrass): Wait until soil temperatures consistently reach 65°F, typically late April through May depending on region. Another good indicator is to **wait until the turfgrass has been mowed twice for the year**.
- **Cool-season grasses** (tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass): These grasses benefit most from fall fertilization but can receive a light application (0.5–1.5 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft.) in early spring when daytime temperatures are consistently between 60–75°F.
- **Apply nitrogen based on species and turf use**. Higher-traffic areas with access to rainfall and/or irrigation typically require more nitrogen than low-traffic areas with limited water access.

Recommended rates:

- **Zoysiagrass: 1-3 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft.** during the growing season (late spring–early fall).
- **Bermudagrass: 2-4 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft.** during the growing season (late spring–early fall).
- **Tall Fescue/Fescue Blends: 2-4 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft.** during the growing season (spring and fall).

? WHAT LAWN DISEASES SHOULD I BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR?

Reduce disease risk by improving drainage, avoiding excessive nitrogen applications, and mowing at recommended heights.



photo: B. Bowling, Univ. of Tennessee

Large Patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*) is a common issue in warm-season grasses like zoysiagrass and bermudagrass during cool, wet conditions in spring and fall. This disease becomes highly visible in the spring during green-up, leading to frequent questions from clientele. While spring fungicide applications can help, preventative fall treatments in high-risk areas are generally more effective. Bermudagrass often recovers quickly, while zoysiagrass may take longer and, in severe cases, requires replanting.



photo: Y. Jo, Texas A&M AgriLife

Symptoms: circular, discolored patches that range from a few inches to several feet in diameter. The affected turf typically turns yellow, orange, or reddish-brown at the outer edges, with thinned or sunken centers that may recover slowly. Infected leaves often pull away easily from the plant's base, showing signs of rot at the crown and lower leaf sheaths. The disease thrives in areas with poor drainage, excessive thatch, overwatering, or high nitrogen levels applied late in the growing season.



WHAT LAWN DISEASES SHOULD I BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR?

Dollar Spot (*Clarireedia spp.*) develops in spring when night temperatures exceed 50°F, although symptoms may not appear until late spring or early summer. This disease thrives when turf experiences 10 to 12 continuous hours of leaf wetness, often due to heavy dews in late spring or early summer. Turfgrasses low in nitrogen are more vulnerable and recover more slowly. Other contributing factors include drought stress, low mowing, excessive thatch, frequent irrigation, and poor air circulation.

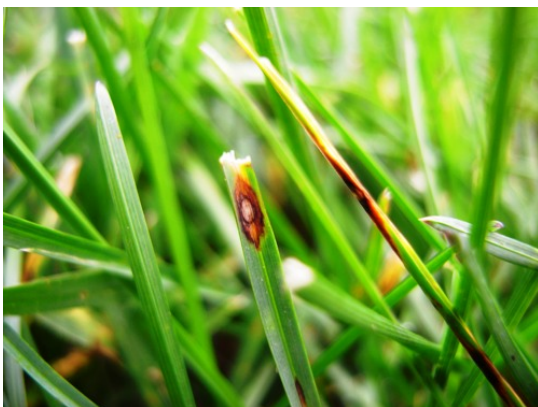
Symptoms: Dollar spot appears as small, round, bleached-white or tan spots on closely mowed turf, typically the size of a silver dollar (1-2 inches in diameter). In taller turf, spots can expand up to 6 inches. Affected leaves develop white or tan lesions with reddish-brown borders, often giving them a "straw-like" appearance.



photos: D. McCallum, Univ. of Tennessee



Leaf Spot (*Drechslera* and *Bipolaris*) is most active under cool, wet conditions, with fungi thriving at **60°F to 65°F** (though some species can survive at any temperature above freezing). High humidity and prolonged leaf wetness create ideal conditions for infection, especially when turf remains damp for extended periods. Both nitrogen deficiencies and excessive nitrogen can worsen leaf spot.



Symptoms: Leaf spot appears as small, dark brown to purplish lesions on turfgrass leaves, often with a tan or straw-colored center. As the disease progresses, lesions may expand and merge, causing leaf tissue to yellow and die. In severe cases, infected areas can thin out, giving the turf a scorched or drought-stressed appearance. Additional diseases such as spring dead spot or Pythium may occur in intensively managed sites like golf courses or athletic fields. When in doubt, collect a diagnostic sample and consult a specialist.

photos: Michigan State University
canr.msu.edu/ipm/diseases/leaf-spot



I'M CONSIDERING WARM-SEASON TURFGRASS - SHOULD I PLANT ZOYSIAGRASS OR BERMUDAGRASS?

When selecting between zoysiagrass and bermudagrass for home lawns, it's essential to consider factors like maintenance, establishment, climate tolerance, and overall performance. Both grasses offer distinct advantages and challenges, so your choice should align with your specific site conditions and management expectations.

	Zoysiagrass	Bermudagrass
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique aesthetic – There is more variability in zoysiagrass appearance, and many consumers like the unique, lush appearance of zoysiagrass • Dense Growth & Weed Competition – Forms a thick canopy that can be effective at reducing weed pressure when healthy • Improved Shade Tolerance – Some cultivars handle moderate shade better than bermudagrass • Moderate Cold Tolerance – Many cultivars such as ‘Meyer’ or ‘Innovation’ can offer moderate cold tolerance • Reduced Inputs – Zoysiagrass will often require less mowing and less nitrogen than bermudagrass, but may require greater cultivation or fungicide inputs • Fewer Insect Issues – Zoysiagrasses are often less appealing to some insect pests, such as armyworms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast Establishment & Recovery – Grows quickly and self-repairs well after damage. • Lower Disease Pressure – Generally less susceptible to disease, or recovers more quickly from disease than zoysiagrass • More Affordable – Bermudagrass can generally be less costly than zoysiagrass depending on which cultivars or varieties are desired • Drought & Heat Tolerance – Thrives in hot, dry conditions, with newer cultivars like TifTuf and Tahoma 31 exhibiting improved drought performance or water-use efficiency • Flexible Mowing Heights – Adaptable to different mowing heights based on cultivar • Planting Method Flexibility – Bermudagrass can be more easily planted by homeowners through diverse methods such as seed, sprigs, or sod
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease Management – Zoysiagrasses may have higher disease management costs due to their susceptibility to large patch and slow recovery from damage • Thatch Accumulation – Some zoysiagrasses may require more frequent cultivation (i.e., verticutting) to manage thatch • Slow Establishment & Recovery – Zoysiagrasses often take longer to establish and may not recover as quickly from injury compared with bermudagrasses • Limited Seeding Options – Only two seeded varieties available (Zenith, Compadre); sod is the best choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Canopy & Weed Potential – Less dense growth habit can sometimes lead to greater weed pressure • More Aggressive Growth – Can spread invasively into landscape beds • Higher Maintenance Needs – Generally requires more frequent mowing and greater nitrogen, but may require fewer fungicide and cultivation inputs in a lawn setting • Shade & Cold Sensitivity – Less tolerant of shade and cold, though newer cultivars such as ‘Tahoma 31’ and ‘Northbridge’ offer improved cold tolerance
Select Cultivars or Varieties Available in TN*	<p>Cultivars well-suited for lawn use (vegetative, available as sod or plugs ONLY):</p> <p>Palisades™, Innovation®, Zeon®, Gateway™, Meyer</p> <p>Seeded Varieties: Zenith® and Compadre®</p>	<p>Select Vegetative Hybrid Bermudagrasses (sod, sprigs, or plugs): Tifway® (also marketed as Tifway II® or Tifway 419®), TifTuf®, IronCutter™, Tahoma 31®, Celebration®, NorthBridge®, and Latitude 36®</p> <p>Select Seeded Options: Jubilee Blend™, La Prima Blend™, Arden 15™, Blackjack™, Casino Royale™, Hollywood™, Maya Mirage 2™, Monaco™, Princess 77™, Rio™, Royal™, Bengal™, Sahara II™, Sunbird™, Transcontinental™, Yukon®, and Common</p>

*This list is not comprehensive, but reflects commonly-available varieties or cultivars that can be sourced in Tennessee. Consumers are always encouraged to explore other local and online options.

Where to source and purchase:

Big box stores may offer some readily-available options to consumers. During the primary growing season, they will even partner with regional sod producers to sell sod on site. However, consumers may find more options at local lawn and garden retailers, co-ops, and through their local landscape contractors. Many sod producers will sell direct to consumer in certain quantities. You may also search for producers in your local area to see whether this is an option when sod or sprigs are desired.