

**Help Clover is Taking Over**  
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Lately, I have had several calls about clover control and fertilizing lawns. Clover is a tough weed to eliminate. The best advice for clover control is to keep your lawn healthy through proper watering, fertilization, aeration, thatch control, and disease management. It is when the lawn is stressed that weeds like clover can become quickly established. Soil fertility is very important, as clover will not grow well when there is sufficient nitrogen available for plant use.

Using a herbicide that contains MCPP (like Weed-B-Gon or Trimec) will control clover in lawns; be careful if spraying over the roots of trees and shrubs as dicamba will damage these desirable plants. Clover control takes time; it will seem to take forever to kill the clover. Six to eight weeks are required to kill clover. Be patient and watch as the clover begins to die. Definitely do not spray these chemicals again for at least eight weeks. For better long-term control one must improve the quality of the turf.

Soil fertility is a very important portion of any lawn weed management program. Turf grasses should be fertilized several times throughout the growing season. How many times you fertilize depends on many factors including grass cultivars, soil texture, mowing techniques, and water availability. For a high-maintenance irrigated lawn where clippings are removed fertilize four times per year. When clippings are left on the lawn three applications are required. For low-maintenance lawns without irrigation where clippings are removed use two applications, and when clippings are left on only one application is needed. Each application should have no more than 1 lb N/1000ft<sup>2</sup>. Most fertilizing should be done in the fall. High-maintenance lawns should be fertilized in August, September, October or November, and next year during May or June. Low-maintenance lawns should be fertilized in August and again in October or November. If you mulch your clippings back into the lawn eliminate one application.

After the heavy rainfall we recently experienced it may be a good idea to fertilize now, as much nitrogen may have been lost to leaching. Leaching moves nitrogen out of the root zone and plant roots will not be able to reach the nitrogen. I am suggesting a rate of one-half lb N/1000ft<sup>2</sup> now. Be sure to water your lawn after application and throughout the rest of the summer. Fertilize gardens, especially raised beds with a granular fertilizer and work into the soil. Use a liquid fertilizer for containers and hanging baskets. Give your roses and other shrubs some fertilizer but not after August 1. These plants need to harden off for winter and additional fertilizer can stimulate more growth.

Proper nutrition and lawn care will choke out hard to control weeds, like clover. A good established lawn is the best weed control method. Weeds pop up where grass stands are thin. Chemical herbicides can help get your weed situation under control, but if the initial problem is not corrected the weeds will be back.

Feel free to call me at 605-394-2188 or email to [ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu](mailto:ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu) if you have questions or comments about this article.