

Where Did All These Weeds Come From?
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By definition a weed is any plant that is growing in a place where it is not wanted. They pop up in turf, gardens, between the cracks in sidewalks and driveways, even in the gutters of houses. What we do about them depends on several factors; including identifying what weeds are present, where they are growing, the time of the year, and the individual's perspective on chemical use.

The first factor is to determine what weeds are present. Annual weeds like crabgrass, purslane, pigweed, cocklebur, and ragweed have a very different control strategy than perennials like Canada thistle, quackgrass, dandelion, and plantain. Physical removal, mowing, and herbicide application can effectively control annual weeds. The main thing to remember for annual weeds is not to let them go to seed, as you will have more weeds next year.

Perennials are a bit harder to keep in check. They require a complete killing of their underground storage organs to eliminate them. Herbicides are more typically used to control perennials in the home lawn. Products like Weed-B-Gon and Trimec contain growth regulator herbicides like 2,4D, MCPA, and dicamba. These products are very effective on perennial broadleaf weeds but not on grasses. Herbicides are best if sprayed after August 10th, as perennial weeds will start storing sugars in their roots for next spring. Herbicides are translocated to the root and will kill the entire plant.

The second factor, where are the weeds growing, can give us good hints as to what type of control method to use. If weeds are growing in turf, one needs to realize that weeds can become established when grasses are stressed. Proper watering, fertilizing, aeration, and thatch removal all contribute to how quickly weeds can become established. Weeds in perennial beds can be controlled by using glyphosate (Round-up) either by painting on the chemical or very carefully spraying between plants. Glyphosate only kills plants that the chemical comes in contact with and is not absorbed by plant roots. Weeds growing in beds with mulch can be pulled easily.

The time of the growing season is important in weed control in that the growth habits of certain weeds dictate how easily they will be killed. For instance, Canada thistle is a biennial plant. The first year it grows as a rosette and the second year it will flower. During the first year you will have a difficult time seeing them in turf. At this stage they are very vulnerable to herbicides. During the second year of growth they are very difficult to kill and work hard to produce seed.

The last factor is of importance in that too many homeowners and gardeners are very quick to spray weeds even before knowing if they have a problem or not. Some people will not use a chemical at all and others overuse them. Chemical use in the future depends on intelligent use of chemicals now. Consider other factors before spraying weeds in your yard and garden. Give some other techniques a try before spraying. There are even some organic methods you can try to control weeds without the use of chemicals.

More information can be found by visiting <http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html>
or by calling me at 605-394-2188.