

## Horticulture 2011 Newsletter

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Video of the Week: [Spring Crabgrass Control](#)

### TURFGRASS

#### Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers



Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work. They do not keep the seed from germinating but kill the young germinating plant. Crabgrass preventers are just that – preventers. With few exceptions they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied before germination. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil. Microorganisms

and natural processes begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. If some products are applied too early, they may have lost much of their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are fairly ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products. (Dimension and Barricade last longer. See below.)

For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little later. April 15 is a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. The April 15 target works well for most of the state, but for southeast Kansas April 1 is more appropriate, and for northwest Kansas May 1 is best. Additionally, weather varies from one spring to the next, and with it the timing of crabgrass germination. For this reason it is often better to base timing on the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. A follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later unless you are using Dimension or Barricade.

Dimension and Barricade are the only two products that give season-long control of crabgrass from a single application. In fact, they can be applied much earlier than April 15 and still have

sufficient residual strength to last the season. Barricade can even be applied in the fall for crabgrass control the next season. Dimension can be applied as early as March 1. Because of the added flexibility in timing, these products are favorites of lawn care companies who have many customers to service in the spring.

Though Dimension cannot be applied as early as Barricade, it is the herbicide of choice if it must be applied later than recommended. It is the exception to the rule that preemergence herbicides do not kill existing weeds. Dimension can kill crabgrass as long as it is young (two- to three-leaf stage). Dimension is also the best choice if treating a lawn that was planted late last fall. Normally a preemergence herbicide is not recommended unless the lawn has been mowed two to four times. But Dimension is kind to young tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass seedlings and can be applied as early as two weeks after the first sign of germination. Lawns established in the fall can be safely treated with Dimension the following spring even if they have not been mowed.

Note that products containing Dimension and Barricade may use the common name rather than the trade name. The common chemical name for Dimension is dithiopyr and for Barricade is prodiamine. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow instructions carefully. (WU)

## FRUIT

### Fertilizing the Home Orchard



Fruit trees benefit from fertilization around the bloom period, but the amount needed varies with the age of the tree. Normally, trees primarily need nitrogen, so the recommendations are for a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Use the following rates:

Trees 1 to 2 years old, apply one-fourth cup of fertilizer per tree;  
Trees 3 to 4 years old, apply one-half cup per tree;  
Trees 5 to 10 years old, apply 1 to 2 cups per tree;  
Trees more than 10 years old, apply 2 to 3 cups.

You may also use nitrate of soda (16-0-0) but double the rate recommended above. If a soil test calls for phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 but triple the rate.

On apple trees, last year's growth should be 8 to 10 inches, cherries should have 10 to 12 inches, and peaches should equal 12 to 15 inches of terminal growth. If less than this, apply the higher

rate of fertilizer, and if more, apply the lesser amount.

Spread all fertilizer evenly on the ground away from the trunk of the tree and to the outer spread of the branches. Water in the fertilizer. (WU)

## PESTS

### Ants in the Home



April showers bring spring flowers and ants. Ant home invasions typically start after the weather warms. A few "scout" ants search for food and water. When they find what they are looking for, they will lay down a chemical trail to show others the way. If the homeowner can trace the ants back to a nest, control is simple. Spraying the nest with a labeled insecticide will take care of the problem. Unfortunately, nests are often outside the home and can be extremely difficult to find. Also, ants are so small that finding and caulking all potential entry points is usually not practical. Treating the trails is

another tactic that may give temporary relief but normally does not work over the long term; the ants simply find another way.

In the end, homeowners are often left with two strategies: sanitation and baits. Eliminating crumbs, grease, scraps or other food materials will help discourage ant invasions. Ants use the most easily accessible food sources, which leads to use of baits. By using bait materials the ants like, you can trick them into taking the insecticide back to the nest where it is fed to the queen and other members of the colony. Over time the nest will be destroyed.

There are a number of commercially available homeowner formulations that contain both the bait and insecticide and come pre-packaged in a child-resistant station. If ant activity increases around the newly set bait station, do not worry. The insecticides are meant to be slow acting so the product can be transported back to the colony before the worker dies. Unfortunately, not all ants are attracted to the same baits. Also, the food preference of ants may change over time. If one bait product isn't attractive, try another. (WU)

### Bagworms, It's Still Too Early to Spray

Timing is critical in many things, including controlling bagworms. Though handpicking is effective through much of the year, often it is impractical because of the sheer number of bagworms. But if you only see a few bags, now would be a good time to pick them off and destroy them.



New bagworms will likely hatch and leave the mother's bag in May, but spraying is not usually recommended until later in June. Spraying now will be ineffective because they are too well protected inside their mother's bag. Closer to hatch, watch for an article on when and what to spray. (WU)

## Miscellaneous

### Plants Recommended for Kansas



Sometimes it is difficult to track down the K-State recommendations for horticultural plants adapted to Kansas. We have a link on our Horticulture Information Center web page that brings all that information together. Included are fruit, vegetables, woody plants, lawn grasses as well as annual and perennial flowers. Trees are further broken down into those recommended for northeast, northwest, south central, southeast and southwest Kansas.

The URL for the Horticulture Information Center is <http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=583>  
(WU)

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