

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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The best way to prevent crabgrass infestations in lawns is to maintain a thick, healthy lawn through proper mowing, irrigation and fertilization. However, if crabgrass is a problem in your yard, the time is fast approaching to apply a preemergence herbicide to control it. Crabgrass preventer must be applied before crabgrass has germinated. That is typically towards the end of April or the early part of May, depending on the spring. Proper timing of application is towards the end of the forsythia bloom season or when the redbud trees are in full bloom.

If crabgrass is a problem, there are several preemergence herbicides that will control crabgrass in established lawns. These include benefin, bensulide, pendimethalin and dithiopyr. An alternative product is corn gluten meal. This natural product can be used as a lawn 'weed and feed' product and an alternative to the synthetic pesticides. It is produced as a fine yellow powder but can be pelletized for easier application to the soil. It offers preemergent control of weeds like dandelions, pigweed, plantain, lambs quarter and curly dock as well. To be effective, it must be applied ahead of weed germination. Moisture is also needed to activate the material but extended wet periods may reduce effectiveness which is also true of synthetic preemergence herbicides. Research shows there are no harmful effects on mature Kentucky bluegrass.

The recommended rate of application for corn gluten meal is twenty pounds per one thousand square feet. Research has shown this will reduce crabgrass infestation by fifty to sixty percent the first year. This application rate also provides two pounds of nitrogen per one thousand square feet.

It is important to realize there is no post emergence control of weeds with this product. Corn gluten meal will not provide as complete a control as synthetic pesticides and is likely to cost more. However, it does provide a natural substitute for those who choose not to use synthetic herbicides for pre-emergence weed control. To learn more about corn gluten meal and where to find it, check out the following website: www.gluten.iastate.edu.

To fertilize your lawn this spring, choose a fertilizer that contains slow release nitrogen. This will be listed on the bag as sulfur-coated urea, methylene urea, IBDU, triazone or as a natural organic fertilizer. Do not apply more than one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. For example, if you are using a fertilizer with an analysis of 20-5-10, you would need to apply five pounds per 1000 square feet (This analysis means the bag contains 20% nitrogen (N), 5% phosphorus (P₂O₅) and 10% potassium (K₂O); therefore 5 lbs fertilizer times 20% N = 1 pound actual nitrogen). Be sure to clean up any fertilizer that lands on the sidewalk or driveway in order to prevent it from running off into the sewer system. This helps protect our water resources.

For more information, contact the Grundy Office of Iowa State University Extension at 319-824-6979.