

Orchardgrass in lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that people become frustrated with two plants growing in their yard. One is a grass called orchardgrass and the other is a grass like looking thing called nutsedge. We'll tackle orchardgrass today and nutsedge tomorrow. Orchardgrass is a clumpgrass that comes in as a contaminant in low cost tall fescue seed. It tends to form a big clump and the grass is a lighter green than the fescue - at times almost a gray green. Orchardgrass has several stems coming up and the base of the stem is very flat. The real problem with orchardgrass is that it grows faster than fescue and has more seed stalks than leaves so it's a very open and ugly clump. Preventing orchardgrass is easier than getting rid of it. It is quite prevalent in cheaper K-31 tall fescue. If you get improved tall fescues with seed sources from the Pacific Northwest you don't seem to have much problem. If you have it in your lawn there is no way to kill it without killing everything. Right now, while it's easy to see, either dig up the clumps and get rid of them or carefully spray, or carefully paint with a small paintbrush, some form of glyphosate. Once it dies, remove the plant add soil or level out the soil and then wait until September to reseed. You could try to reseed now but if you've applied crabgrass preventer it may not work and even if it does germinate, you'll really need to keep it well watered to get it through the summer. If you aren't sure that orchardgrass is what you are fighting, just break off a seed stalk at the base and bring it in to me to confirm the identification!

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Hammering Sedge

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Nutsedge is a plant that sort of looks like a clump of grass, but isn't. Sedges have triangular stems and the leaves come off the stem in three different directions. Sedges can be very pale to almost yellow or they can be very dark green, depending on the species. Sedges are hard to control because they have many little tubers, sometimes called nuts, attached to the roots. These tubers are often dormant until you try to pull the plant up. While you may successfully pull up the mother plant, you are likely to leave several of the tubers in the ground. Once the tubers are separated from the mother plant, they break dormancy and start growing. So where you once had one plant, now you have several! You can take the scorched earth approach and treat with glyphosate or roundup or kleenup. This may be the best way to deal with it in the garden. Fortunately if you have nutsedge in your yard there are several effective controls that won't hurt your turf. My favorite, and the most readily found one is called, are you ready for it? Sedge Hammer! I'm serious, you can't make this up! Sedge Hammer should be available at most garden centers. It is pricey but if you don't have a really serious sedge problem one treatment should take care of it. Sedge Hammer will control the plant and the tubers but you want to wait until the three to eight leaf stage which we should be at. But you want to get treatment applied by June 21st. Possibly because of shortening days, if the initial spray is AFTER June 21st, mature daughter tubers may be stimulated to grow following the death of the mother plant! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

A Weedeater Is Not A Lawn Mower!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I see it every summer and it just makes me want to scream. People using a line trimmer, aka a weedeater, like it was a lawnmower. Okay, I will concede that there are some cases where you have a steep hillside or a ditch that just may not be safe to mow, especially with a riding lawnmower. My thought on that is to quit trying to grow grass and plant it to a low growing ground cover, or just quit trying to mow it. But anyway, when I really get upset is when I see an entire flat lawn being "mowed" if you will, with a weedeater. Okay, here's all of my specific complaints about this practice. First of all, you aren't cutting the leaf blade. You are tearing through it with a fast moving nylon string. Does it cut off the leaf blade or plant? Sort of - tearing it is a better description and that results in a very jagged edge and this jagged edge will have some dieback and often leave you with these cute little white caps. Then there's the height issue. For one thing it is very irregular. It may be four inches tall in some areas and 2 inches tall in others. No matter how hard you try you will not be able to maintain an even vegetation removal height. What usually happens though is that the operator of the weedeater runs it so the bottom hub is bounding along at ground level. This means that the effective cutting height is somewhere between 1 and 2 inches. This is entirely too short for most of the lawn grasses we grow. You open up more bare ground, you expose turf grass crowns and you will have more weeds and less grass. If you actually have grass, please, use a lawn mower!

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