

Orchardgrass explosion

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was driving down the street last week and saw a lawn with lots of tall clumpy topped seed heads. Yup - it's orchardgrass time! Orchardgrass is unfortunately a very common contaminant in many bags of grass seed. Since it is another grass crop it won't show up as weed seed. If you are buying grass seed look closely for the words "other crop seed" on the seed tag. If you see anything much over .1% don't buy it. It is probably orchardgrass. When it is growing in your lawn, orchardgrass will be a fairly large very open clump of grass. The stems, especially at the base are very flattened. This time of year orchardgrass will be growing twice as fast as everything else. Literally 48 hours after mowing, the orchardgrass leaves will be noticeably taller than anything else. Since it is a cool season grass, just like fescue or bluegrass, there is nothing that will selectively kill it out from your yard. You can dig the clump out, replace a little soil to smooth it out and overseed. Or you can carefully spot treat the clump with glyphosate. I've even gone out with glyphosate and a cotton swab stick and treated individual leaves to make sure I didn't kill desirable grasses. It's time consuming but works! Ultimately your best approach is to never let it get started. As I said earlier, when you are buying grass seed, look at the tag that has information on what's inside the bag, every bag of seed HAS to have one. If you see "other crop seed" that isn't 0% or maybe 0.1%, put the seed bag back and look for a different brand. There is clean seed out there, so use it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Star of Bethlehem

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is a spring flowering bulb that can quickly become a weed in people's lawns. The plant is called star of Bethlehem. It puts up little green grass like leaves with a white line running down the middle of the leaf and when it blooms it has a pretty little white flower. Once the flower fades the foliage continues on for sometime during the spring before dying down in mid summer. The problem is that it can displace grass as the clumps grow and spreads such that when the foliage dies down, there is a bare spot in the lawn. You can try digging the plant up but because it has a bulb, you are likely to run into problems with dormant bulbs staying behind and growing next year. This plant is hard to control and will probably take a couple of successive years of treatment to totally get rid of it. Glyphosate can be used, but this is sort of a nuclear option as it will kill everything and reseeding will be necessary. A better option would be to use Weed Free Zone by HiYield or Speed Zone by PBI Gordon. These products have different active ingredients that provide a better chance for control. As I said, it will take several years to really get these under control but persistence will pay off. Both Weed Free Zone and Speed Zone are also probably your best bet for controlling wild onion and wild garlic. If you aren't sure if you have wild garlic or onion, as opposed to star of Bethlehem, just grab a few leaves, break them and take a whiff. Wild Garlic and wild onion will have the classic oniony or garlicky smell, star of Bethlehem won't. Or just bring me a sample to ID! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Cedar Apple Rust

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. During that rainy spell a couple of weeks ago I was stunned to see cedar apple rust galls becoming active on cedar trees. First of all it was cold, and secondly it was so darn early! Cedar apple rust can be a devastating foliar disease for apples and flowering crabapples. The disease bounces back and forth between cedar trees and apple trees. On the cedar trees you'll see these weird orangish red jellyfish looking things. These galls emit spores in the spring when we have rain, like we have had in the past few weeks. The spores land on newly emerging leaves. If the apple tree is a susceptible variety then later on the leaves will develop yellow spots and eventually fall off. The disease won't kill the tree but can damage fruit production and weaken it to the point that other diseases will start to move in. The good news, if there is any, is that even though we've had one round of rust activity, many apple leaves were not yet out and infectable. So there is still time to start treating your apple tree. If you have never seen funny yellow spots on your apple leaves, you probably have a resistant variety and don't need to worry. But if you know you've had issues in the past, start spraying now! Probably the best all around fungicide for apples or crabapples is going to be myclobutanil which is found in Immunox and many other fungicides. Spray every 7 to 10 days - 10 in dry weather, 7 in rainy weather, until about the end of May. Gall activity may stop before then, given how early it started, but it's better off not to risk it. Just keep spraying through the end of May to be sure!

This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Take it easy with the lawnmowers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I am not easily annoyed. Okay, yes I am. But I don't often show that I'm annoyed. One thing that does annoy me is when people mowing lawns feel like they are at the Indy 500. There's even a lawn mower commercial, you've heard it, about it's not about mowing fast but how well you mow fast. Darn it people, just stop it. I see so many homeowners that can't wait to start mowing lawns and then it becomes a race to see how fast they can do it. Slow down for crying out loud. I see lawn mowing services and I sometimes want to get out of my vehicle, yank these bozos off their lawn mowers and slap them. These people are in such a rush to get done that they are leaving tire marks on sidewalks and divots in the lawn. We've had a lot of rain. Even if we hadn't had a lot of rain, we have people who water way too much - more on that in coming weeks. Soggy soils underneath turf make for a fragile setting. Long term wet soils OR frequent shallow irrigation, results in grass plants with poor root systems. These plants become easily dislodged from the soil by some mechanical force, i.e. a riding lawn mower being operated too fast. If your lawn mower is ripping up grass when you turn, then you are running too fast and turning too tightly. No, I'm not a fan of zero turn mowers because there are some terrific forces at play that can cause a lot of damage. So as you mow in the coming weeks, please be careful on that turf. Make wider turning radiuses with those riding lawn mowers and maybe, just maybe, you can slow down. Or even, gasp, use a walk behind mower! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Henbit and Chickweed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Oh my I have seen some beautiful lawns lately. Lush green and full of yellow, purple, white and pale blue flowers. I've even seen some 80 acre crop fields that looked like Bill Snyder Family Stadium on a home football game Saturday they had so much purple in them. All the rain in late May and early April have created lush growing conditions for all of our lawn weeds. We all know that the yellow flowers, if they aren't daffodils, are dandelions. The purple flowers are henbit, the white flowers are speedwell and the pale blue flowers are chickweed. And they are all doing very well. Of all of those, dandelions is a perennial. All the others are winter annuals, which means that they sprouted and started growing back in September and October. They may have not been very big, but they were there. At this point, even if you do nothing, they will finish blooming, make seed and die. If you spray them, they will still finish blooming, make seed and die. They will die a little sooner, but they will still make seed. But please, feel free to go ahead and treat them. But right before you do that, grab your calendar and mark down in the last week of October to treat your lawn for weeds, because they will be back and growing then. In the fall they are small and very easily controlled. And, you don't have to worry about curling the new leaves of your rose bush which could happen when you treat now. Also, use a combination product like Trimec, weed b gone or something like that. Good old 2,4-D by itself won't get these weeds, well, other than dandelions anyway! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.