

## Unwelcome Grasses in Your Yard

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

As we roll into the official start of summer, some of you may be noticing grasses, or grass like plants in your yard. Some may be dying and you find that annoying. Some may be growing faster than your desired grasses, and look off color, which is also annoying. Some may be a brighter green than your grass, but just look odd. Or your yard may be like mine and if there isn't dust blowing, it's all good! But let's spend a little time discussing these three issues.

In yards with a thin grass stand and especially yards being mowed way too short, you may see a lot of grass that is dying right now. If you look closely you will also see seed heads that when looked at closely have little seeds that look like badminton shuttlecocks. This is little barley. It is a winter annual grass that starts growing in the fall, sends up seed heads in mid spring and dies by early July. The seeds are really a problem as they can get into the pads on the feet of pets and cause discomfort or injury. They can also get into your socks and hurt like the dickens! This grass is going to move in where there is bare soil. It's dying right now so there is nothing that you can do. Work on getting your lawn thicker, mow it taller and fertilize in the fall. You can use some crabgrass preventers in the late summer to help reduce how many of these plants get started. But for now, all you can do is live with it.

There is a grass known as orchardgrass that is a forage grass used in the eastern USA and is a common seed contaminant in inexpensive tall fescue seed. It never shows up as a weed seed, but will be listed as other crop seeds. First step in dealing with this is not to let it get started by using fescue seeds that have 0% other crop seeds. Orchardgrass tends to be a lighter green, sometimes grayish green, leaf color. It makes a very open clump that sprawls out, and right now is growing about twice as fast as the fescue and bluegrass. There is no way to selectively kill it in a fescue/bluegrass lawn. You can either live with it, spot spray with glyphosate and reseed this fall, or dig up the plants and reseed this fall. But remember, use quality improved tall fescue (or Kentucky bluegrass) that has 0% other crop seeds.

The last issue we are seeing right now is something that looks like a grass but is often very bright green. If you pull up one of the stems you'll find that it has a triangular stem - easily felt in your fingers. This is a sedge. Sedges are not grasses. They are sometimes called nutgrass because they have little vegetative bulblets attached to the root system. These often stay dormant until the mother plant is pulled. Then the bulblets start to grow. Where you may have had just one sedge plant, now you have several. Sedges do produce seeds as well.

We are fortunate that we do have some herbicides specifically for sedges. The most common active ingredients in these herbicides are either halosulfuron or sulfentrazone. Both of these products work but it's going to take several years of treatment to get problems under control and then a little reseeding in the fall to fill in the dead spots. It's important to treat sedges soon. Treatment later in the summer may kill the mother plant but allow the mature daughter tubers (bulblets) to grow. We are probably at the very end of the best treatment season so get started now, and then treat them sooner (June 10 - 21) in future years.

The other option is not to worry about any of these plants. Many homeowners are perfectly happy with a yard composed of mixed grass species and a few patches of white clover and an occasional dandelion. That's everyone's choice as to how they want their yard or lawn to look and I'm not going to be one to "yard shame" anyone. Whatever you choose, enjoy your yard this summer!