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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Crabgrass problems

From the calls we have been receiving at the Extension Office, many home lawns are having problems with crabgrass.

Crabgrass is a warm-season annual. Crabgrass seed germinates in the spring and summer when soil temperatures reach about 60 degrees F. The plants dies as temperatures cool and the days become shorter in the fall of the year. During the growing season the crabgrass plants produces an abundance of seed that could be a problems for many years.

Crabgrass often invades bare soil areas where the turf is thin. Avoid practices that damage the turfgrass stands in late spring or early summer.

Sound turf management practices will help prevent crabgrass from appearing. Mowing at the proper height and irrigating properly will have an impact on crabgrass problems. Crabgrass likes frequent and light sprinklings of water.

Several preemergence herbicides are available to use in the early spring for crabgrass control. Preemergence herbicides should be applied in East Texas from late February to mid March. It is very important to read the herbicide product label and apply according to their directions. Some of the labels will recommend a second application approximately 6 to 8 weeks later to extend the effectiveness of the herbicide into the summer.

Occasionally, turfgrass injury may appear during stress periods after the application of preemergence materials. Injury usually resembles drought stress and may be attributed to root injury by the herbicide. The symptoms should be treated as drought stress by increasing the frequency of irrigation and applying fungicides to reduce disease occurrence on the weakened grass.

Selective postemergence control of crabgrass with chemicals is effective in some situations. The organic arsenicals including MSMA, DSMA and others effectively control crabgrass with little injury to bermuda grass when used properly. These materials should never be applied to fescue, St. Augustine, centipede or bahia turf.

When crabgrass and other weeds are dominant and renovation is required, nonselective herbicides such as glyphosate can be used. These products will kill existing weeds and grasses prior to planting. Again, label recommendations with respect to turf renovation should be followed. Keep in mind that crabgrass and other weeds will germinate from seed after treatment with these products.

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