

Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers

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Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work and assume they kill the weed seed. Such is not the case. They do not kill the seed or even keep the seed from germinating but rather kill the young plant after it germinates. Therefore, they do not prevent germination but prevent emergence.

Crabgrass preventers are just that – preventers. With few exceptions they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied before germination. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil.

Microorganisms and

natural processes begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. If some products are applied too early, they may have lost much of their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are fairly ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products. (Dimension and Barricade last longer. See below.)

For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little later. April 15 is normally a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. However, this year, we may want to go a week or two early. For southeast Kansas, this week would be appropriate, and for northwest Kansas, mid-April would be best.

Even better, base timing on the bloom of

ornamental plants. The Eastern Redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. A follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later unless you are using Dimension or Barricade. Products that do require a follow-up application include pendimethalin (Scotts Halts) and Team (Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control).

Dimension and Barricade are the only two products that give season-long control of crabgrass from a single application. In fact, they can be applied much earlier than April 15 and still have sufficient residual strength to last the season. Barricade can even be applied in the fall for crabgrass control the next season.

Dimension can be applied as early as March 1. Because of the added flexibility in timing, these products

are favorites of lawn care companies who have many customers to service in the spring. Though Dimension is usually not applied as early as Barricade, it is the herbicide of choice if it must be applied later than recommended. It is the exception to the rule that preemergence herbicides do not kill existing weeds. Dimension can kill crabgrass as long as it is young (two- to three-leaf stage). Dimension is also the best choice if treating a lawn that was planted late last fall. Normally a preemergence herbicide is not recommended unless the lawn has been mowed two to four times. But Dimension is kind to young tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass seedlings and some formulations can be applied as early as two weeks after the first sign of germination. However, read the label of the specific product you wish to use to ensure that this use is allowed. Lawns established in the fall can be safely treated with Dimension the following spring even if they have not been mowed.

Note that products containing Dimension and Barricade may use the common name rather than the trade name. The common chemical name for Dimension is dithiopyr and for Barricade is prodiamine. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow instructions carefully.

We recommend crabgrass preventers be applied before fertilizer so that the grass isn't encouraged to put on too much growth too early. However, it may be difficult to find products that contain preemergents without fertilizer. Those that don't contain fertilizer are listed below. I didn't find any products containing Barricade that did not also have a fertilizer.

Pendimethalin - (Benefin + Trifluralin) - Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control
Dimension - Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper - Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer - Green Light Crabgrass Preventer

Frost Proof Vegetable Plants

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Certain vegetables can withstand cold spring temperatures as long as they have been toughened up by gradually exposing them to sunlight and outdoor temperatures. This "hardening off" process usually takes about a week. Reducing watering and temperature is the key to toughening up transplants. If possible, move transplants outside for a portion of each day.

Start by placing them in a shady, protected location and gradually move them into a more exposed, sunny location as the week progresses. Hardened off cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and onions can withstand temperatures near 20° F without being killed. Lettuce plants are not quite as tough but will be okay if exposed to temperatures in the mid 20s.

Don't hesitate to put these plants out now if extreme cold is not forecast. (Ward Upham)

Get set for spring termite swarms

Termite swarms are often the first visible evidence that termites are a problem in and around a home. There are several different types of subterranean termite species, and many begin to take flight when weather conditions are favorable, such as in the spring and summer.

According to the pest management company Orkin, swarming may be linked to the age and maturity of a termite colony. Swarms also may indicate the presence of other conditions, such as moisture in the air or abundant light.

Swarming termites are the winged alates that venture outside of the nest to mate and reproduce, forming newer colonies. Thousands of swarms may be in the air. The termites will squeeze through cracks and crevices in the walls and foundations of homes. They also may be seen coming out of the ground outdoors.

Orkin notes that the presence of a swarm of termites around a home suggests a strong likelihood that there is a well-established colony of termites living in or near the home. According to The Terminix International Company, over her lifetime, a termite queen can lay one million eggs, producing new swarms each year.

It is essential that homeowners recognize when termites are a problem in a home, as they can cause considerable damage. In the United States alone,

subterranean, drywood and dampwood termites cause more than \$5 billion in damage annually and can cost homeowners an average of \$8,000 in treatment and damage repairs, says Terminix.

Homeowners who suspect they have a termite problem should call a professional exterminator. Flying ants can be mistaken for termites and tend to swarm as well. Termites have two pairs of wings of equal length, while ants have wings of different lengths. It may require the eyes of a trained expert to recognize these subtle differences.

There are some other indications that termites may be in a home or nearby.

- Termites shed their wings as they enter a new home. If wings are found around windows, vents, doors or pipes coming into a home, it may mean termites have entered.

- Look for muddy, flattened tubes about the width of a drinking straw. Termites travel through these tubes and the tubes help protect the termites from predators and temperature extremes.

- Dark areas or bubbling in flooring can indicate termites are feeding below.

- Termites eat wood from the inside out, so any damage may not be visible. Tap suspect wood and listen for a hollow sound.

- Look for and mark any areas where termites are seen entering or exiting the house. Then direct the exterminator to these areas.

Termites can cause substantial damage to a home, but their infestations are largely treatable. When a termite swarm is spotted, call a professional immediately.

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Pets

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- Provide a comfortable indoor climate. Many pets spend the majority of their days indoors where climate and temperature can be controlled. However, if yours is an outside pet or requires a brief stint in the garage or an uninsulated area, make sure the temperature in such areas is comfortable and safe.

- Take precautions around the house to keep pets safe, comfortable and secure.