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Common Broadleaf Grass Control in Your Lawn

How do I kill crabgrass in my lawn? The most common question asked as folks are seeing clumps of coarse (wide bladed) grass coming up in their lawns. However, what is evident right now is tall fescue. To most of us, these two grasses look the same.

Tall Fescue

Tall fescue is a cool season perennial grass emerging early and from last year's roots. Tall fescue grows in clumps and has good heat and drought tolerance favoring development in drought stressed lawns. Methods available to the homeowner to rid themselves of this unruly grass are to either dig it out or apply Roundup (glyphosate) herbicide (weed killer). If you are digging up the fescue, it is essential to get all the roots or the grass will come right back. When using Roundup, the herbicide will kill all the grass it comes in contact with including anything growing in the patch. This time of year with cool to moderate temperatures, Roundup may take several weeks to work. Some new herbicides are being experimented with that will selectively kill the fescue while leaving the fine textured grasses. These herbicides are only available to professional lawn care companies.

Crabgrass

Crabgrass is a warm season annual grass germinating from seed when the soil temperatures rise above 55 degrees in late April and early May.

Crabgrass development is favored in lawns that are mowed short and with shallow, frequent watering. The preferred method of crabgrass control is to treat it before it emerges. Most of these pre-emergent fertilizers should have already been applied by now. These products are available to homeowners and professional lawn care companies. Often the herbicide is included with fertilizer for convenience such that the lawn can be fertilized and the crabgrass controlled simultaneously. Another way to control crabgrass is later in the season when it becomes prevalent. Previously, these herbicides were only available to lawn care companies but now are also available to homeowners.

In summary, the preferred method to control crabgrass is with a pre-emergent herbicide. What you are probably seeing now in the lawn is tall fescue which is only controlled by physically digging it out or killing with Roundup.

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