

Crabgrass Identification and Control



Crabgrass is one of the most common grassy weeds in lawns in the Midwest. This annual weed can become quite a problem if not treated regularly.

Identification

Crabgrass has very distinct characteristics which can make it rather easy to decipher. When looking for crabgrass, it is often first found in areas where the soil warms up sooner especially along sidewalks and driveways. The blades are wide and flat, growing flat along the ground. Blades start out a lime green and turn a light green with a often purplish red coloring at the base of the blades. Seed heads will appear typically in mid-August through fall. The long wispy seed heads are also a distinct characteristic.



Photo Credit: crabgrasslawn.com

Growth

This annual weed is only reproduced by seed. Germination only occurs when soil temps reach above 55 degrees Fahrenheit for several days in a row. The germination of crabgrass can extend for several months sometimes leading up to early July. Crabgrass grows well in fertile well drained soils but can also prosper in droughty less fertile soils. Growth starts somewhat upright, but as the blades grow they will start creeping along the ground. Seed production will lead to seed spreading for germinations the following fall.

Control

Control is best achieved by applying a preemergent herbicide that specifically controls crabgrass and has at least 3–4-month residual such as *Fertilome For All Seasons Fertilizer and Preemergent herbicide*. The long residual is important to prevent the late season seeds from germination. Post emergent spraying is also effective to control crabgrass either as a standalone control or in combination with a preemergent. Quinclorac has shown good control on crabgrass both early and late in the season. *Fertilome Weed out with Crabgrass Killer* is a good option.

Hand pulling plants is also an effective option if chemical options are not desired. This labor-intensive option may become too time consuming for realistic goals if the infestation is too great.