CONTROL OF BERMUDAGRASS ON THE HOME GROUNDS

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Bermudagrass (Cynodon dactylon) is one of the most prevalent and difficult to control weeds in Virginia. The name most commonly given to this grass in Virginia is wiregrass. However, there are other grasses that are also called wiregrass. The Latin generic name "Cynodon" which means "dog's tooth" is derived from the pairs of scaly sheaths which are present at the lower branches of the creeping stolons. New plants are created by formation of roots at the stolon nodes. Scaly rhizomes (underground stems) and seed also contribute to the spread of this pest. Bermudagrass rhizomes are capable of emerging from beneath macadam or asphalt.
paving. Gardeners are also frustrated by the penetration of vegetables by rhizomes. The plant is native to the warmer regions of both hemispheres, but was introduced into the United States. In eastern Virginia and in other Southern States bermudagrass is considered to be the most important pasture grass. Breeding programs are now under way to develop varieties that are better suited for lawns. Although it may grow as far north as Oregon or Massachusetts, it ordinarily does not persist north of Maryland in the East.

Bermudagrass is a warm season grass which turns brown in the fall and resumes growth in the spring much later than bluegrass or fescues. The unsightly brown patches in the spring and fall spoil the looks of bluegrass or fescue lawns.

CONTROL

Soil Fumigation by Methyl bromide: The most effective method of elimination of bermudagrass is by soil fumigation. Methyl bromide is recommended for this purpose, although there are other soil fumigants available which could be used. Work the soil to a fine texture to about an 8" depth. The soil temperature should be above 55°F at time of application. The rate of application should be 1 pound per 100 square feet of area. Expose the soil to methyl bromide for 24 hours under an airtight cover, then remove the cover to aerate the soil for 24 to 48 hours before reseeding. Methyl bromide when properly used kills stolons, rhizomes and seed in the soil. Other control treatments will not kill seed in soil. Methyl bromide is extremely poisonous and should be used only by people trained in its proper use. Do not plant treated area to vegetables, except for tomatoes or strawberries.

Dalapon: Use 10 tablespoons of dalapon plus 2 teaspoons of detergent in 1 gal. of water and apply to 1,000 sq. ft. of grass or wet the foliage. Apply when the bermudagrass is actively growing and repeat at 7 to 10 day intervals until complete control is obtained. In warm, moist soil dalapon will disappear within 30 days, and reseeding or resodding may be accomplished. If dalapon is used in a vegetable garden, do not use treated area for vegetables during that season. Dalapon can be used safely as directed spray around the base of trees and shrubs if the soil is not extremely sandy. Certain species such as Nandina are extremely sensitive to dalapon. Do not make heavy applications to the root areas of shallow rooted shrubs or trees.

Black Plastic Mulch: Sometimes it is convenient to control bermudagrass in small areas by covering the infected area with a black plastic. Additional soil or mulch should be added to hold the plastic in place. One growing season should be sufficient to kill existing plants. However, more plants may be produced from seed in the soil the following year.

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KEYS TO PROPER USE OF PESTICIDES

1. Read the label on each pesticide container before each use. Follow instructions to the letter; heed all cautions and warnings, and note precautions about residues.
2. Keep pesticides in the containers in which you bought them. Put them where children or animals cannot get to them, preferably under lock and away from food, feed, seed, or other material that may become harmful if contaminated.
3. Dispose of empty containers in the manner specified on the label. If disposal instructions are not printed on the label, burn the containers where smoke will not be a hazard, or bury them at least 18" deep in a place where water supplies will not be contaminated.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR IF SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS OCCUR DURING OR AFTER USE OF PESTICIDES.