

# LANDSCAPE ADVISER

Central Jersey Region

Spring 2014

908-482-9552

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## Controlling Pesky Weeds in Your Lawn

They're unsightly for sure, but weeds do more in turfgrass than simply look bad; they also compete with your healthy grass plants for light, water and nutrients.

Many broadleaf weeds that invade lawns respond readily to weed control applications. As weeds do tend to reappear, it's important to follow up with subsequent applications. These weeds may include dandelions, broadleaf plantains, thistle, spurge, knotweed and chickweed.

This is also prime time for crabgrass, which emerges in spring and moves quickly to fill in any holes in the turf left from winter disease or other causes. The best way to control crabgrass is to prevent it from ever appearing with pre-emergent weed control.

Our Healthy Lawn Plan includes using TruGreen's proprietary dual-line spray system to apply weed control only when and where it's needed on a lawn.

We inspect your lawn for weeds and apply appropriate broadleaf weed control products through the dual-line spray system, while simultaneously applying a liquid fertilizer. If

we apply a granular fertilizer, the weed control will be administered using a spray wand, but in both cases, our systems allow for on-demand weed control applications to areas identified for treatment.

Some weeds are more difficult to control and may require an extended application period or customized approach:

- Selected herbicides may be effective against many difficult perennial weeds, but they may require repeated, well-timed applications which may extend over several growing seasons.
- Some annual weeds may require more than one application of a pre-emergence herbicide, with the second application timed to coincide with secondary flushes of germination.

The first and best defense against any type of weed is to maintain a healthy, vigorous lawn through proper fertilizing, irrigation and mowing techniques.



## Protecting Your Turf From Damaging Insects and Disease



If your turfgrass is exhibiting symptoms of disease or drought stress – but there's no visible evidence of disease and plenty of water – you might be looking at an insect infestation that needs to be treated.

We divide insects into two categories based on where they damage turf – surface and subsurface (soil) pests – and the treatment depends on which type of insect is present and active.

Surface Pests – These insects – some examples are sod webworms and chinch bugs – and they feed on the leaves and stems of grass or in the

thatch layer. Damage from these insects sometimes doesn't appear until late summer and can be confused with drought stress.

Subsurface/Soil Pests – These pests attack the root zone of the turfgrass, and they're more difficult to control because the grass and thatch layer provides a level of protection from control product applications.

Subsurface pests tend to be more damaging than surface pests: while grass plants can generally survive the loss of some leaf blade material caused by surface pests, heavy damage to the root zone by subsurface pests can kill the plant.

Unless you're a lawn care professional, it may be difficult to diagnose a problem with your turfgrass. Our lawn care treatment plan includes surface insect control, and we also offer subsurface insect control. Please talk to your TruGreen specialist to determine if your problem is insect or disease-related, preventative measures you can take, and how to promote recovery in damaged areas.

## Protect Your Lawn with Proper Mowing and Irrigation

Proper mowing and watering can greatly improve the overall health of your lawn. We recommend the following best practices for mowing:

- Cut your grass to the recommended height. Grass that's cut too short is more susceptible to disease, weeds, drought stress. It's particularly important to mow high during dry weather. Suggested mowing heights vary by grass variety, so check with your TruGreen specialist to determine the best height for your grass.
- Mow frequently. With each mowing, no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade should be removed. Frequency will change depending on weather patterns and your grass type.
- Return clippings to the lawn. Return your grass clippings to the turfgrass to add extra nutrients.
- Sharpen your mower blade. A dull mower blade will diminish your lawn's appearance. If your lawn has an overall white appearance, your mower blade may need to be sharpened.
- Mow in the evening. Mowing in the cooler

part of the day during the hot summer months will help prevent your lawn from turning brown.

Proper irrigation is critical too. Adjust your watering schedule as needed based on seasonal weather variations, but remember most grasses require between 1" to 2" of water per week, depending on soil type and weather conditions. Some additional tips for watering:

- Reduce the effects of drought stress. If your lawn is showing signs of drought stress – wilting grass that doesn't spring back, colors changing from bright green to gray or blue-green – water at the first signs.
- Water in the morning. Although time of day for watering isn't critical, watering in the morning is the most efficient in terms of water usage.
- Aerate. Lawns with thatch or compacted soil will less efficiently absorb water, so aeration is recommended to improve water infiltration.
- Watch for problem areas. For grass near large trees, additional water may be needed to offset water absorption by large roots.

**Greg Ryback**

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Ryback Landscaping  
908-482-9552  
rybacklandscaping@gmail.com  
www.rybacklandscape.com