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Controlling Annual Bluegrass in Lawns

Poa annua "po'anna" is commonly known as annual bluegrass.

Annual bluegrass is a cool-season annual grass that germinates in late summer into fall, growing slowly during the winter. In late spring it flowers and drops many seeds that lie dormant until the return of cool weather in the fall, starting the cycle again. In areas of stressed turfgrass, annual bluegrass can out-compete other grasses. The annual bluegrass plant itself will die when heat of summer arises, leaving bare patches in the lawn. As annual bluegrass increases, the patches get larger and more seeds are left in the soil to germinate.

Maintaining the health and density of your lawn is the best method for preventing a weed problem. Proper mowing height, seeding rate, irrigation and fertilization of turfgrass is the best defense against weeds. A healthy lawn requires should not be mowed too low, as taller turf shades the soil and prevents weed seed germination. Grass mowed too low is also stressed and less able to compete against other weeds. Mow often enough to keep annual bluegrass from producing seeds!

Healthy turf also requires proper watering. By watering deeply and infrequently, preferably once weekly, turfgrass develops a deeper, thicker root system able to withstand stress periods better. *Frequent, shallow watering benefits shallow-rooted annual bluegrass while inhibiting the development of deep, healthy roots on fescue and other desirable turfgrasses.*

Fertilizer applied at proper times and with proper rates will strengthen your lawn while not overly stimulating undesirable weeds. There are a few post-emergent herbicides that will selectively control annual bluegrass, but they are way too expensive for most homeowners. The preferred herbicidal control method is to use a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent seed germination in late summer to early fall. Pre-emergence herbicides should be applied to well-established lawns in late summer to early fall when temperatures drop to a daytime high of 75F for 4 consecutive days.

At Renfrow's we sell Hi-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed & Grass Stopper containing Dimension granules (dithiopyr) and Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control Granules (benefin & trifluralin). Either of these products gives good to excellent control of annual bluegrass. They are labeled for use on centipedegrass, zoysiagrass, Bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass, & turfgrass tall fescue lawns. If either of these weed-grass pre-emergence herbicides are applied in the fall on a fescue lawn, the lawn cannot be over-seeded for a specified period of time. Read the product label for the product duration of control. Apply at the label rate for poa annua control and water in after application.

CAUTION: Pre-emergence herbicides are *not* selective and can prevent the germination of turfgrass seeds and the development of roots on turfgrass as well as sprigs and plugs. Read the label for proper wait-time before seeding the treated area.