



Topic: Crabgrass Control

Question: At our next landscape committee meeting, we will discuss the crabgrass situation. Most of the lawns in this 200 home neighborhood have some crabgrass in Floratam, making them look like they have patches of dead grass. My understanding is that there is no chemical currently available that will eradicate this weed. We can't afford to re-sod these areas, and even if we could, seeds spread by nature would bring the crabgrass back to us. The homeowners have expressed concern that crabgrass will eventually take over our lawns completely. I don't think that would happen, as Floratam does knit together to keep weeds from spreading. However, the crabgrass did get in somehow. Advice from you would certainly be appreciated.

- Donna, South Fort Myers

Answer: Crabgrass (*Digitaria* spp.) of various species are low growing weeds that are tolerant to mowing as is the lawn. That is because the growing points of both crabgrass and Floratam are located below the mower blade. Crabgrass seeds are minute and are easily carried by the wind. As long as it grows, crabgrass produces seeds. That's about 42-48 weeks each year. Thus a reservoir of millions of seeds can remain dormant for years on the average lawn. The seeds are opportunist and germinate when parts of the lawn weakened due to heat stress, insect or disease damage or even scalping of the lawn. Once fully germinated, there are no herbicides available for use by the homeowners or commercial applicators to control actively growing crabgrass in St. Augustine lawns. However, crabgrass does have its weakness. Being an annual it dies en mass at about this time of year because of cold weather. Thus, there are now dead spots in infested lawns. However, seeds from those deceased plants will begin to germinate in March as the weather warms. Consequently, crabgrass control is largely dependent on preventing seed germination. January to March is the right time to do this by applying a preemergence herbicide such as Dimension (Dithiopyr) or Crab-Ex (Proflam). Both products are easily applied as granular. Beyond March, if left untreated, new crabgrass seeds will have germinated closing the window for preemergence chemical control. Thereafter, hand-weeding or Glyphosate application become the two main choices. A repeat application 6 or so weeks after the initial application may be necessary. Follow label instructions.

Useful Links

[St. Augustinegrass for Lawns](#)
[Stephen's Webpage](#)

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by sending an email to brownsh@leegov.com.