

Goose grass

Goosegrass (*Eleusine indica*) is an annual warm-season grass that develops in commonly reclining, leafy tufts. The weed is characterized by its silvery white base and dark green color. Coarse blades grow, flat or folded, from 2 to 8 inches long and .1 to .3 inches wide. Mature stems can grow up to 2 feet tall. Goosegrass flowers are composed of 2 to 10 finger-like spikes that resemble zippers. Other common names for this species include silver crabgrass, crowfoot, or wiregrass.

Host material and range

This troublesome weed, often confused with crabgrass, is found in sports turf areas throughout the South. In Florida and parts of Texas, emergence begins as early as March, and in more northern areas, as late as June. Traditionally, goosegrass germinates when soil temperatures at the 4-inch level reach 63 degrees Fahrenheit for 24 consecutive hours. Sunlight also provides optimum germination. As a rule of thumb, goosegrass germinates three to four weeks later than crabgrass, depending on the area of the country. Emergence contin-

ues throughout the summer season. Goosegrass thrives in hard, compacted or poorly drained soils, as well as in high-traffic areas where turfgrass cover is minimal.

Bert McCarty, professor and turfgrass specialist at Clemson University, says, "Goosegrass has the ability to grow under lower soil oxygen levels than desirable turf, which makes it all the more difficult to control."

Current threat

Each goosegrass plant can produce 50,000 seeds. Once it is established, annual re-infestations are very likely to occur. Due to its far-reaching root system, goosegrass easily tolerates close, frequent mowing. Because of this, mature blades are extremely difficult to mow. Often, the blades become frayed by mowers, and develop a whitish tip. Mower blades must be kept very sharp in order to effectively cut goosegrass.

Prevention tips

Preemergent herbicides will control goosegrass in warm-season grasses. In order to achieve maximum control, application rate and timing is critical. Rotation of herbicide chemistries is

also crucial for resistance management. McCarty recommends rotating products such as pendimethalin, dithiopyr, and prodiamine.

Richard Duble, turfgrass scientist at the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, found that goosegrass can be controlled with post-emergent herbicide applications. For example, Revolver herbicide provides control of a variety of cool season grasses, including goosegrass and *Poa annua*, in bermudagrass and zoysiagrass.

What can you do?

Maintaining complete grass cover and applying practices that promote vigorous turf are the best ways to keep goosegrass infestation minimal throughout the warm seasons. Other practices that reduce soil compaction, and therefore goosegrass growth, include reducing irrigation, increasing aeration and diverting traffic. If a small area of weeds has already emerged, dig it up! If the weed problem persists, use a post-emergent herbicide. ■

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