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Horticulture News

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Current Date: 6/3/21

Release Date: as soon as possible

Many Causes of Weeds in Your Lawn

Weeds, weeds, weeds! Ask homeowners about their No. 1 lawn concern, and the usual reply is "weeds." But most homeowners are too narrow in their approach to controlling weeds. When someone asks, "How do I control weed x?" they usually mean, "What do I spray on it?"

Although herbicides are an important tool for controlling weeds, they are only a part of a total weed control program. The best defense against weeds is a dense, healthy, vigorous lawn, which can only be obtained through proper fertilizing, watering, and mowing.

Compacted soil. Soil compaction is a hidden stress on the turfgrass root system. The grass is unable to compete effectively with weeds. Clay and silty soils are especially prone to compaction. This is a major problem in much of Harvey County.

Improper watering. Frequent watering encourages weed seed germination, disease, thatch, and a shallow-rooted turf that is less competitive with weeds for soil moisture and nutrients.

Improper mowing. Mowing too low and too infrequently thins the turf, allowing weeds to get started.

Improper fertilizing. Fertilizing too much, too little or at the wrong time may benefit weeds more than grass. Most lawns in Harvey County are tall fescue. Tall fescue is a cool season grass that should be fertilized in May, September and November.

Insect and disease injury. Weeds rapidly invade lawn areas that are thinned by insects and diseases.

Excessive wear. Turf areas that are used for pets, recreation and sports are subjected to wear and compaction. Weeds become a problem in these areas, requiring intense weed control and turf management.

Wrong kind of grass. The wrong kind of grass for the location will gradually decline and be invaded by weeds.

Environmental stress. Weeds often take over a lawn after it has been weakened and thinned from weather-related stresses. Drought or flood can have a dramatic effect on a healthy lawn.

Thatch. Excessive thatch causes shallow-rooted grass and contributes to insect and disease problems, which are followed by weed invasion. Thatch also can reduce the effectiveness of some soil-applied weed control chemicals