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Getting Ready for Sericea

There are many characteristics of sericea lespedeza that help it thrive in grasslands. It has the ability to produce a tremendous amount of seed, and that seed can lay dormant for long periods until conditions are opportune to sprout and grow. The result is a seed bank that will persist for years to come. That seed bank will soon be rearing its ugly head for another season.

Control programs are, to some degree, limited. There are no known biological controls. Mechanical control via the use of mowing or animals needs to be done at the right time and done on a consistent basis. Herbicide programs can be successful, but they, too, will need to be repeated. It is no wonder sericea is one of our most troublesome noxious weed species.

Start with proper identification. Sericea is a perennial legume with trifoliate leaves. These leaves are club or wedge-shaped, lining a stem (vegetative now, woody later...) that is typically about three feet tall – or taller. Blooming starts in August with white to cream-colored flowers exhibiting a purple ‘throat.’ Seed is produced in September. Once you know what it looks like, it is easily identified, but there are other similar species that may cause confusion.

Mechanical control can be successful in combination with chemical control efforts. Grazing with goats (four to five per acre of sericea) can help reduce seed production. Frequent mowing in mid-late July is an option, but be careful to avoid damage to desirable plants. Herbicide applications four to six weeks after mechanical control can further increase control.

Work using prescribed burning has shown it can be a remedy. Spring burns tend to increase seed germination, requiring in-season herbicide applications to reduce sericea levels. Fall burns (August/early September) have been found to nearly eliminate seed production.

Herbicide programs also provide good results. Early season applications on vegetative stage sericea with triclopyr containing products (PastureGard HL/Remedy) work well. Products containing metsulfuron are more effective in late summer when sericea is actively blooming. Broadcast or spot applications are both effective when applied according to label directions.

For further information on product names/rates/etc..., request a copy of the 2020 KSU Chemical Weed Control Guide available from your District Office.

Anthracnose on Shade Trees

In addition to the uneven growth we have seen from many landscape plants due to cool damp conditions, disease pressure has also increased. Anthracnose is one such disease, particularly on sycamore, maple, and ash species. When present, you may notice withering of young leaves that may turn completely black while older leaves tend to show brown areas along the major leaf veins. If severe, the leaf stem can also be affected, causing leaf drop.

Leaf drop might seem pretty severe, but be patient. Healthy trees will put on new leaves in a few weeks with the defoliation causing minimal damage to overall tree health. Trees have plenty of time to produce new leaves and make the energy reserves needed to survive the winter.

Do not worry about fungicide applications. The trees should recover just fine. Fungicides also do not cure infected leaves, only protecting those leaves that are well covered prior to infection. In other words, applying after symptoms are present will not help.