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### ***Considering Fall Weed Control Programs***

After a harvest that didn't provide many 'breaks,' adding fall weed control programs to the to do list might not seem attractive. Can we skip it and just do it in the spring? The henbit or marehail won't get too bad, right? Is a fall weed control program really worth the hassle?

A look back at the University of Missouri study data (complete study available online at <https://ipm.missouri.edu/IPC/M/2013/9/Considering-Fall-Herbicide-Applications-Its-not-just-about-the-weeds/>) suggests fall removal of winter annual weeds via herbicide applications resulted in higher spring soil temperatures than areas with dense winter annual weed infestations. Removal of the winter annuals resulted in soil temperatures as much as five degrees higher in corn and up to eight degrees higher in soybeans. Maybe not a big deal now, but it could be in the spring when we're trying to start planting.

Available moisture was also an issue. The presence of a dense cover of winter annual weeds resulted in soil moisture levels as much as thirteen percent lower in corn and six percent lower in soybeans as compared to clean check strips.

KSU studies (across 14 sites) have shown an average nitrogen uptake from winter annual weeds of about 16 pounds per acre. In addition to pure nutrient losses, they also found delaying the removal of winter annuals until spring reduced N uptake in developing corn plants.

Soybean cyst nematode (SCN) levels can even be affected by the presence or absence of a fall weed control program. Henbit is a strong host for SCN, providing an opportunity for levels to increase. Pennycress is considered a moderate host. Shepherd's purse and common chickweed are weak hosts. We have them all, and they may be compounding the fight you are already in to manage soil SCN levels.

Finally, the Missouri work also found that winter annual weeds serve as alternative hosts for corn pests like flea beetles and some Lepidopteran insects. In soybeans, removal of winter annuals in the fall reduced total insect populations ten-fold soon after soybean planting as compared to areas where winter annuals were left until seven days prior to planting.

We may have an opportunity for fall weed control – and we may not. Either way, start developing your weed management strategy now and give yourself an advantage over the pest issues above next spring whenever you can.

### ***Houseplant Care as Winter Approaches***

As day length shortens, houseplant growth slows. That means houseplant management needs to change to match the reduced moisture and fertilizer needs plants have now.

It's pretty easy to overwater/fertilize during the winter, with excess water and nutrient additions damaging root systems. Too much water eliminates oxygen in the root zone, and plants decline. Excess fertilizer burns roots, reducing a critical component of the plant's food factory.

To accommodate slower growth in winter, avoid fertilizing in December and January and only fertilize at a twenty-five percent rate in November and February. Avoid watering on a schedule, too. Instead, let the soil be your guide. Check to see if the soil is moist to a once inch depth by inserting your finger into the potting mix. Water only when the mix is dry.