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Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Time for Greenup

As I write this, temperatures are below freezing with snow on the ground. By the time you *read* it, daytime highs may have a six in front of them. Thus, is typical of spring in Kansas, and also means our cool season grass species (brome/fescue) will be headed for green-up sooner than later. It also means an opportunity to evaluate armyworm damage from last fall.

Evaluation can be done in various ways. A quick and simple way is to walk fields looking for differences in dormant canopy cover. You'll likely see relatively quickly where stands recovered in the fall because they'll have some level of dormant foliage covering the soil surface. If you drag your foot along the ground, any canopy cover in the heavily fed on areas will likely be dislodged, revealing bare ground surfaces.

As telling as the aforementioned evaluation may be, you can learn even more by digging up some plants as you walk fields. Dig some in a good area as a reference, then compare it to other areas throughout the field. You will likely see differences in below ground moisture and root mass. While difficult to say with any certainty without magnification if roots are alive or not, you *can* look for new shoot growth at the base of crowns. Some stands aren't showing anything at all just yet, but others have begun to show below ground shoot growth, meaning plants still have the potential for some level of recovery.

If plants didn't go in to dormancy with good root energy reserves because of feeding injury, recovery will likely be slowed to a degree. A quick observation of stand cores we're growing out right now in the office would suggest damaged areas are in some cases 7-10 days behind undamaged areas when it comes to the green-up process. Patience is going to be key this growing season if we're going to try to allow stands to recover before making a replant decision.

Flower Beds Weed Prevention

For some folks, weeding flower beds is therapeutic. In annual flower beds, a good mulch job combined with some hoeing or hand weeding can generally keep weeds down until the plants canopy and prevent further weed germination. Even so, sometimes even that 'little' time needed may be too much. That's when a pre-emergence herbicide can help.

The term 'pre-emergence' is a little bit of a misnomer. They don't actually keep weed seeds from germinating, instead killing young plants just as they start to grow.

They also can't just sit on the surface. Products should be watered in with at least a quarter inch of water so young roots will come in contact with the herbicide.

Pre-emergence products certainly aren't perfect. One hundred percent control simply isn't attainable, but they can give you a head start on some weeds. They also tend to be much more effective on grassy weeds (think crabgrass) versus broadleaves like dandelions or spurge.

Existing plants will *not* be controlled, meaning products must be applied prior to weed seed germination. They also don't last forever, providing just enough control to get to canopy.

There aren't a lot of products available, but most contain the active ingredients dithiopyr or trifluralin. Look for those active ingredients on the label as well as the ornamental plants you are going to be applying on to make sure they are safe. *Always* read and follow product labels.

Cindy Williams
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Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

See Clearer with Green Foods!

March brings us closer to spring colors, such as fresh green foods! Some of those green foods contain lutein which helps keep our eyes healthier and could reduce the eye disease age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Lutein is a xanthophyll found in foods such as basil, parsley, kale, spinach, broccoli, peas and lettuce.

Some risk factors for AMD are out of our control such as advancing age, being female, having light skin and/or blue eyes, and having a close relative with the disease. Other factors include smoking, being sedentary, not consuming enough fruits and vegetables, and too much sun exposure.

But eating eye-healthy foods can reduce the chances of getting AMD. So how can you incorporate these green foods into your diet? Add bright green vegetables to a party tray. Add a green salad as a side dish to lunch or dinner. Make the color pop in broccoli and green peas by blanching them briefly in boiling water, then put them in ice water to stop the cooking process. This enhances the green color to make those vegetables more appetizing.

No Canning Recipes for “One Jar Meals”

We all like the convenience of great-tasting “one jar meals”. But, any additions or deletions made to an approved canning recipe would need a new process time calculated for it. It is not safe to change the recipe and use the same process time for canning.

One -dish meals often include thickening ingredients or are cooked down to a thicker consistency than expected for the process time for an individual ingredient. These situations are likely to result in hazardous foods. You may add your special ingredients after you open up a safely canned jar of food, to make a dish.

Also keep in mind that after canning and storage, your special recipe may no longer taste exactly the same as when it is made fresh. Sometimes special recipes are best enjoyed as freshly made dishes.