

## Bermudagrass is a Noxious Weed

This year, a noxious weed called Bermudagrass has been reported in many areas of Cache County where it was not known to exist. This grass was originally native to Africa but has been used in US since 1750 for pasture and turf. Until recently it was assumed that it was not cold-hardy in much of Utah. Unfortunately, this is wrong.

How it was introduced locally is not known. However, likely sources include hay imported from warmer areas and contaminated grass seed. Once established, it spreads via seed and runners produced above and below ground. In turf situations, Bermudagrass has the tendency to out compete other grasses, becoming the dominant turf.

Bermudagrass is sometimes confused with crabgrass. Both are only active from late spring to early fall and have similar seed heads. However, crabgrass usually has wider blades and does not spread through runners. One often knows if Bermuda grass is present when they pull it. It often comes up in long strands that “pop” every foot or so. This popping sound is from baby plants being torn off (staying in the soil) as the strands are removed. For further information about identifying Bermudagrass, see the following webpage from UC Davis: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7453.html>.

Controlling this pest can be quite difficult and the best way to not get it is by maintaining a healthy lawn. Mow at a height of 2½ to 3½ inches, water less frequently but with greater amounts of water and avoid fertilizing during the hottest part of the summer. Otherwise, if installing a new lawn, plant quality grass seed containing little to no noxious weed seed. If using sod, inspect it carefully before delivery. Likewise, inspect top soil before it is delivered also.

If Bermudagrass gets established in the yard, smaller infestations can be covered with UV resistant black plastic construction sheeting. It should be spread at least two feet beyond where the weed is observed and left in place for 8-12 weeks. The plastic can be covered to hold it in place.

Several herbicides also exist that are labeled for control or suppression. As far as nonselective options, glyphosate products (RoundUp type products) are the most available. Glyphosate non-selectively kills most plants. Do not apply it to the lawn or other desirable plants. Bermudagrass will need to be sprayed every 4-5 weeks until it is controlled. This time period allows the grass time to regenerate if it not completely killed.

To remove it from flower and shrub beds, a selective grass killer can be used such as Poast or Over-The-Top. Like glyphosate, these will need to be reapplied several times periodically for complete control.

Fortunately, a few products exist that will suppress or control Bermudagrass in the lawn if regularly used. One is triclopyr. Products containing triclopyr suppress Bermudagrass only and must be repeatedly used. Otherwise, fenoxaprop, (Bayer Advanced Bermudagrass Control for Lawns) can be used. Its label states that it must be regularly applied for up to two years for it to completely work.