

Problem: Henbit and Chickweed



Henbit



Chickweed

Description: Henbit and other winter annuals, such as chickweed and speedwell, germinate in the fall but are most noticeable in the spring. However, if chemical control efforts are delayed until spring, their effectiveness is usually very limited. Although this article focuses on henbit, the comments on control apply to chickweed and speedwell as well.

How do you know you have henbit? Henbit has squarish stems and small, rounded, deeply veined leaves (less than 1 inch across when mature) with lobes along the margin. The upper leaves have no petiole (stalk); that is, they are attached directly to the stem. The flowers are pinkish-purple and shaped like a tiny trumpet. Flowers are abundant during April. "Stands" of henbit are quite attractive when in full bloom.

Recommendations: As stated above, chemical controls in the spring are not very effective on henbit. Control is much easier in the fall of the year. There are two choices. A preemergence herbicide is one possibility and a postemergence is second.

Control is much easier in the fall of the year. There are two possible courses of action, as far as chemical controls go. The first is to apply a preemergence herbicide in early to mid-September. This will prevent henbit and other winter annuals from germinating. Preemergence herbicides labeled for both henbit and chickweed include prodiamine (Barricade), dithiopyr (Dimension), isoxaben (Gallery) and pendimethalin (Halts and others). The second course of action is to wait until late October or early November (after most henbit has germinated) and use a postemergence broadleaf herbicide. Use a product such as 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F. These herbicides will work at temperatures below 50 degrees but the weeds are killed at a slower rate. This approach works well because henbit is relatively easy to kill in the fall and many people want to treat for dandelions at that time (i.e., October) anyway.

Spot treating may be needed in the spring (March) whichever method of control you use but is more likely with the use of preemergent herbicides. Use Weed Free Zone, Speed Zone, Weed Out, Weed-B-

Gon, Trimec, or one of the special henbit herbicides early in the spring before they have put on much growth.

As a final note, henbit will not be very competitive in dense, healthy lawns, so good cultural management will reduce the need for herbicides.

References:

1. [Henbit and Chickweed in Lawns](#), Ward Upham, Horticulture 2023, No. 14, April 11, 2023

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