

**Yard Tips 8**  
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**IT'S STILL BORING...BUT...**

Like last month, there isn't a whole lot to do in the yard in December, which is why *Yard Tips* is running late. I had to wait this long for an inspiration on something to write about. I finally got my inspiration when I found a little *Poa Annua* grass ("poa") getting an early start in our yard along with several broadleaf weeds, thanks to all of unseasonably warm weather we've been having. You may have noticed irregular swaths of green appearing in your yard and around walkways, driveways and the street. That's your bermudagrass fooled by the warm weather into trying to fight the inevitable (dormancy).

"Poa," pronounced "poe-uh," is arguably the worst weed we have to deal with in bermudagrass turfs, because once it's up and spreading, there isn't a selective herbicide that will hurt it, let alone kill it, unless you use a huge amount of highly concentrated herbicide, in which event you will be killing out your good grass too. Whoever invents a selective herbicide for poa will be a good candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The poa that is getting started early is coming from seeds that, but for our warm winter weather, would not have germinated until March or April. Now, you can kill this stuff in December when there isn't much (anything) else going on in the yard, as opposed to the way things are during the busy, busy yard months of early Spring. So, AFTER your lawn returns to full dormancy, you can zap the poa with Roundup or a similar nonspecific herbicide.

You can buy Roundup at any lawn and garden business or at the "big box" stores like Walmart, Home Depot, Lowe's, etc. Choose the large pre-mixed size with a carrying handle and a pump-up attached spray wand. Tote it along with you as you

patrol your yard looking for weeds, and when you see a spot of poa in a totally dormant turf, spray away. Roundup is neither expensive nor difficult to apply.

If you have over-seeded your bermudagrass with fescue, rye or bluegrass, don't use Roundup, or any herbicide to try to kill invasive poa, or you will end up killing both poa and your over-seeded grass. In this situation, your only weapon to fight poa is to manually pull the poa out by the roots and toss it in the trash. Poa should never be pulled up and just thrown down on your lawn, because it is always seed bearing, and those seeds will germinate later.

Poa is a dark green grassy weed that grows in clumps with seed bearing shoots radiating outward from the center of the clump. Once it gets started, it prolifically reproduces, spreading everywhere and successfully resisting anything you try to do to stop it. It's a cool season grass, and it's at its worst in early to mid Spring. Make a mental note of the places in your yard where early poa is popping up and wait for the rest of the yard to turn dormant... then, spray the green stuff with Roundup. Poa is easy to find in a dormant yard, because it will be brilliant, dark green against a sandy, brown background of dormant bermudagrass. Before you spray, be sure to look closely and examine the bermudagrass stalks nearest the ground. If you see any green at all, your grass is not dormant. Don't spray!

No matter how careful and thorough you are in the winter months to Roundup your poa grass, you won't get it all. The seeds of this nasty weed seem to live forever, and even though you've eradicated all of the poa you have seen in the winter months, you're likely to have new plants popping up in late winter and early Spring, while the bermudagrass is dormant. So, plan on zapping the new arrivals with Roundup very early in the Spring, but don't delay until

your bermudagrass emerges from dormancy. Wait until your bermudagrass starts turning green, and you'll have no effective way to control poa, except manually pulling it up.

No matter what you do, though, some poa is going to survive. This is hardy, persistent stuff. You must, however, stay after it; and, in time, you will see less and less poa.

A few dandelion type broadleaf weeds are also popping up. Don't spray them with ordinary broadleaf herbicides containing 2-4-D or similar chemicals, because those products are not effective until the overnight temperatures get up into the mid 60's, which will not be until mid-April. They kill by stimulating a plant's growth so that it actually grows itself to death. That's why treated weeds end up with their stalks looking snarled and gnarled. It is okay to use a non-selective herbicide like Roundup on your broad leaf weeds, so long as your turf grass is dormant.

It's a really good idea to kill broadleaf weeds as early in the growing season as possible. They won't be very large early in the cool season, but they will grow big with a vengeance and start reproducing as soon as the weather starts warming up. So, killing out those small cool season broadleaf weeds will go a long way toward your having a weed free yard next Spring, which could help you get that Yard of the Month sign planted in your yard. It's a lead pipe cinch you won't get it if you have prolific weeds in your turf grass.

Weed control is one of the most important aspects of establishing and maintaining a healthy turf grass, and as the growing season marches on, *Yard Tips* will provide you with information on what needs to be done in the way of weed control, how to do it, what products to use and where to buy them. If you choose to have your yard professionally sprayed, check the *Yard Tips* e-mail information against the advice the "pro's" are you giving you, because some of

the "pros" will really take you for a ride if you just give them a free rein.

You may wonder why you're getting yard care and maintenance information as a Raintree function. One of the really great things about living in Raintree is that nearly everyone takes good care of their yards, and when all the yards in a neighborhood are well cared for, property values only go up. Raintree home values have been rising ever since we formed the homeowners association, and they will continue to rise if everyone takes care of their homes and grounds. For many of our homeowners, their homes are the largest single investments they have, which means all of our homeowners have a stake in keeping Raintree an attractive and visually appealing place to live; and that starts with a well landscaped, well maintained yard.