Nimblewill Control in Nevada Lawns

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Nimblewill, *Muhlenbergia schreberi*, is a warm-season perennial grass that is especially troublesome in golf courses, highway medians, and home lawns. It resembles creeping bentgrass and is easy to identify in a lawn because it is slow to green in the spring, forms a dull gray-green patch in the summer and turns brown in early fall. No amount of irrigation or fertilizer in spring or fall will change this pattern. It has thin, flat, soft, leaves with four veins on the upper surface; the leaves are usually less than two inches long.

Nimblewill occurs where lawns are damaged or thin due to poor management. It is more aggressive in shaded areas with moist, rich soil. Nimblewill spreads by seeds produced in early fall and via above ground stems (stolons) that root to form a new plant. Make sure lawn mowers, de-thatchers and aerators are clean before they come into a yard, they may be covered with seed or stolons. Nimblewill is classified as a secondary turfgrass weed because it will not infest a healthy lawn. If management is changed to assure a good, competitive lawn, nimblewill will not become established. If established, nimblewill must be removed and the area reseeded or sodded.

**Control** of nimblewill requires complete weed removal and quality turf restoration. Homeowners should dig out small patches of nimblewill by hand or use a sod cutter if the infestation is large. Dig at least six to twelve inches outside the perimeter of the patch and at least two inches deep. Repair the area with weed-free soil and seed or sod the area with a desirable grass.

Nonselective herbicides can be used to kill nimblewill before it is removed. However, the herbicide will injure or kill nearby plants if it drifts onto them, so use caution. A directed low-pressure spray or a granular application will minimize unintentional damage. Stems or trunks of neighboring shrubs or trees will not be injured by an herbicide application if they are mature, have thick bark and the spray is directed away from them. Nonselective, translocated herbicides are preferred when controlling perennial grass weeds because they move internally in the weed to kill both the shoots and roots. Glyphosate (Trade names: Avail, Blot-out, Ortho’s Kleen-up and Round-up Pro®) is the most commonly used nonselective systemic herbicide for weedy grass control. Glufosinate (Finale®) is also systemic and is effective in controlling nimblewill. Glyphosate kills plants in seven days.
to ten days and glufosinate kills them in about three to five days. It is important to note that weeds under drought stress or very cold conditions are not effectively controlled by these or other herbicides. Apply glyphosate or glufosinate in spring or fall when the soil is moist, but only when nimblewill is actively growing. Repair the vacant area in spring and summer with sod rather than seeding it. The sod will establish more quickly and it will be better able to survive the heat, drought and disease stresses of summer. Mid-summer is an excellent time to control nimblewill. It is actively growing and there is adequate time before the cold of winter to kill the weed, prepare for sowing or sodding the area, and establishment of the lawn. It is best to wait at least 14 days after treatment before tilling and sowing or sodding the area in order for the nonselective herbicide to effectively move into and kill the crown and roots of nimblewill. This also allows time to notice any areas that were missed by the treatment. If the treated area is not dead in two weeks, a second application is needed. More than one application may be necessary to obtain complete control. After the weed patch has turned brown, it can be tilled and replaced with seed or sod. Sow before September 15 in northern Nevada to ensure establishment of the lawn. Sodding may be done much later. Remember, complete destruction of nimblewill is necessary to prevent its reestablishment. Homeowners must realize that the area will be dying and unsightly for two weeks before it can be seeded or replaced with sod.

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