

Success Tip...

Controlling Wild Onions (Garlic)

Never fails – every spring one of the first things to green up and start growing are clumps of wild onions or garlic (next to the chickweed and henbit). And they pop up in both the lawn and the landscape beds. Wild onions are cool season perennials, and begin growing before the turf and most weeds become active. Both species have slender, waxy, smooth green leaves growing upward, and produce a strong odor (garlic or onion) following mowing. They grow from underground bulbs and bulblets, and tend to grow in poorly drained soils, but will grow just about anywhere. They invade landscapes by being transported in contaminated soils, or by distribution of the bulblets or seeds. These will germinate in the late fall months, as well as spring and even early summer (but seen mostly during the cooler months). So now the question is, how do you get rid of them?

Wild Onion Control:

1.) Physical Removal – This is probably one of the most effective means of control. But, for best results, you must remove everything that belongs to that clump. Stems, roots, bulbs, and closely surrounding soil. Dig the entire clump, making sure to get everything, and pitch it out, soil and all. Replace the hole with new soil.

2.) Cultural Practices – Maintaining a healthy lawn and correcting drainage problems may help reduce infestations.

3.) Mowing – This will not kill the wild onions, but regular mowing will weaken the plants as well as preventing them from setting seed or bulblets.

4.) Chemicals – In the lawns, these are considered broadleaf weeds, but not all broadleaf weed killers are effective against wild onions. Sprays labeled for wild onion control are most effective applied in spring or fall, and will require repeated applications (be persistent). The foliage is very waxy and makes it difficult for herbicides to adhere and penetrate, so either bruise the plants by hitting with a stick, or even spraying after mowing may help. Or, use a surfactant to help the herbicide adhere and work more effectively. Bonide's Weed Beater Ultra works great in cooler temperatures and does a nice job on wild onions. You can reseed within 2 weeks after application. In the landscape beds, using a non selective herbicide (Roundup, Bonide's Kleenup, Espoma's 4in1 Weed Control) will work, but again, bruise the plants prior to spraying, or add the surfactant to the herbicide before spraying. And again, it will take repeated applications.

If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em! Yes, wild onions are very edible. Feel free to cut and use the greens from wild onions (make sure they have not been sprayed with herbicides) in salads, soups, or where ever you would use chives or green onion greens.

