

WEED CONTROL

Management of summer weeds is a challenge faced by both landscape professionals *and* home gardeners. Moderate temperatures, elevated humidity, and an occasional evening shower are the perfect combination to launch the invasion. The term weed is somewhat subjective and dates back to the 7th century. Weeds, by definition, are “plants out of place.” According to Ralph Waldo Emerson however, “A weed is but a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.”

Even though we live in relatively controlled environments, it is nearly impossible to prevent weed intrusion. Weeds can invade turfgrass and planting areas and rob them of much-needed moisture and nutrients. They are carried in by the wind and birds or transferred from lawnmowers, which is why we practice thoroughly cleaning our mowing equipment after each use.

The most common weeds found in our areas include creeping spurge (*Euphorbia serpens*), petty spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*), purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), and dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*). We will focus on spurge in this article, giving a brief description of its characteristics, followed by our program methods for mitigation and abatement.



Spurge



Purslane



Dandelion

Plant Description: Spurge is an aggressive summer annual, which has an abundant seed distribution system. A single plant can produce several thousand seeds, which begin to germinate when soil temperatures reach between 75° and 85°F. Spurge can grow in bare turf areas, ground cover, and in the cracks of sidewalks and other similar concrete surfaces. The warm temperatures and high humidity we typically experience in summer create the ideal environment for the plant to grow.

Prevention: Environmental Concepts’ method of prevention is to apply horticultural practices that form and sustain a long-term, healthy landscape environment that

establishes a defense against the undesirable plant. We start with, in partnership with the community, a comprehensive review of the conditions of the landscaping and provide recommendations for a program that ultimately benefits the community.

Weed Abatement: The long-term solution to weed abatement is developing and implementing a comprehensive maintenance program. Our experience over the past nineteen-plus years has shown that implementing a maintenance rotation schedule is successful and efficient in addressing the maintenance needs of the community to ensure customer satisfaction. We have also found that developing an Agronomic Calendar that is tailored to the needs of the community is a cornerstone for communication and a strong landscape maintenance program.

Mulch: Mulch has many benefits, including replenishing nutrients back into the soil while aiding with soil moisture retention. It is also an effective tool for controlling weeds. Mulch acts as a barrier by blocking light from reaching weed seeds and seedlings, which interrupts the germination process. It also prevents the soil from warming, which weeds need to sprout, as previously mentioned above.

Fertilization: Healthy turfgrass also acts as a deterrent to weeds. A healthy lawn will crowd out most weeds, especially spurge, which is a non-competitive weed. And the best way to keep turfgrass healthy is with regular fertilization – at least four times a year. Raising the mowing height can also reduce initial invasion. Most weeds seek out bare spots in turf areas, where there is an abundance of sunlight and less competition.

Summer is when controlling weeds on a commercial landscaping level becomes especially challenging. This is the time of the year when plant growth is at its peak due to the longer days. The summer can also bring excessive heat, which has more of an impact on turf and plant materials than resilient weeds.

Our primary goal is to work with our clients by applying our knowledge and experience in an effort to maintain a healthy and attractive landscape environment for all of our customers and their members to enjoy.