

# Controlling Yellow Nutsedge

## Lancaster County

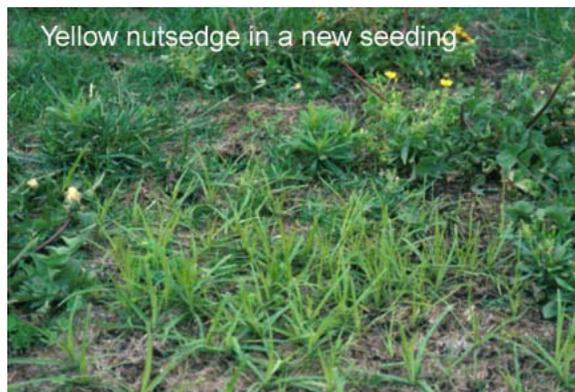
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Yellow nutsedge, (*Cyperus esculentus*), is a member of the sedge family although it closely resembles a grass. In fact, one of its frequently-used common names is yellow nutgrass. It is a common weed in Nebraska lawns and landscapes, and can often be found in areas with moist soil. Yellow nutsedge is a warm-season perennial plant, meaning that the below ground portion of each plant survives the winter and generates new top growth each spring.

When closely examined, yellow nutsedge is found to have a very unique form and can easily be distinguished from turfgrass and other grassy weeds. The leaf blades are light green, "V" shaped with a prominent ridge down the center of the leaf blade and mostly originate from the base of the plant. The leaf blades always seem to grow faster than the surrounding grass, sticking up above the turf only a few days after mowing. The stem is triangular and upright. The flower heads are an umbel; a simple inflorescence with branches radiating from a common point, produced at the top of the plant stem. The branches of the inflorescence have small spikes, are yellow or brown in color and have one or more leaf-like bracts emerging from the base. The root system is shallow and fibrous, often producing small nut-like tubers that serve as food



Purdue University Turfgrass Program

Yellow Nutsedge has a triangular stem and "V" shaped leaf blades

storage organs. These small tubers can sprout and form new plants. The plants also spread by rhizomes, or underground stems, which enables it to move rapidly throughout a lawn or landscape.

Controlling yellow nutsedge can be difficult. Pulling the weeds is usually not an effective control measure, because as the plants are removed, the small root tubers break off and remain in the ground. Each tuber sends up a new plant, initially making the problem seem worse. Determined homeowners willing to doggedly recheck infestations of yellow nutsedge weekly throughout the growing season and pull any new emerging plants as soon as they are seen, can eventually get this weed under control. However, if new plants are allowed to mature and develop tubers before being pulled, then hand pulling will not provide adequate control.

In areas of heavy yellow nutsedge infestation, chemical control may pro-

vide the only viable option. Common grass and broadleaf herbicides will not control yellow nutsedge. Specialized herbicides for controlling sedges must be used. The most effective herbicides currently available for yellow nutsedge control are "Basagran" (bentazon) and "Manage" (halosulfuron). Several applications of herbicide will normally be needed to provide control. Success in controlling yellow nutsedge with a herbicide depends entirely on carefully reading and following label directions. When applying control products, avoid mowing three to five days before and after treatment. To ensure adequate herbicide absorption, do not water the lawn for at least 24 to 48 hours after product application. Applications should ideally be initiated in the late spring/early summer when the nutsedge is young, actively growing and is most sensitive to herbicidal control. Once this weed matures, control is difficult regardless of the treatment schedule. (MJF)