

Controlling Yellow Nutsedge

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 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 provide 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,



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

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)

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

- Grow your own dried flowers. Raise statice, globe amaranth, straw flowers and other everlastings to provide flowers for this year's arrangements.
- Plant gladioli bulbs in late May.
- Set out marigold, petunia, ageratum and fibrous begonia transplants. All are good border plants.
- To grow annuals in containers on the patio, use a light weight soil mixture. Keep the plants well watered, because the soil dries out fast. Apply a water soluble fertilizer according to package directions every two weeks.
- Watering roses with soaker hoses or drip irrigation will reduce the spread of black spot disease.
- Plant ground covers under shade trees that do not allow enough sunlight to grow grass. Vinca minor or English ivy are ground cover plants that grow well in shade.
- Mulch around newly planted trees and shrubs. This practice reduces weeds, controls fluctuations in soil temperature, retains moisture, prevents damage from lawn mowers and looks attractive.
- When you visit botanical gardens and arboretums, take your camera and note pad with you. Plan now for changes you will make in your landscape.
- For maximum landscape interest in a small, vertical space, try annual vines. They can disguise ugly walls and fences. When trellised, they can create shade and privacy while hiding undesirable views. Try morning glory, nasturtium vine and scarlet runner bean.
- Plan a landscaping project on paper first. Do not over plant. Be sure you know the mature size of each plant and allow for growth.
- Lawns maintained at the correct height are less likely to have disease and weed infestation. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue should be mowed at approximately three inches in height. Mow frequently, removing no more than one third of the blade at each cutting.
- Grass clippings can be used as a mulch in flower beds and vegetable gardens if allowed to dry well before use. Never use clippings from a lawn that has been treated with a herbicide.
- Cabbage loopers and imported cabbage worms are green worms. They eat large holes in the leaves of plants in the cabbage family. For control, caterpillars can be picked off by hand or sprayed with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a natural, non-toxic preparation available by various trade names.
- Newly transplanted vegetable plants should be protected from cutworms with collars. Cut strips of cardboard two inches wide by eight inches long, staple them into circles and place them around the plants. Press the collar about one inch into the soil. These collars will fence out the cutworms and protect the stems of the vegetable plants.
- Stay out of the garden when the vegetable plant leaves are wet. Walking through a wet garden spreads disease from one plant to another.
- Four or five layers of newspaper will serve as an effective mulch in the garden. Cover it with grass clippings or straw to prevent it from blowing away.
- Put tools away at the end of the day. Clean them and hang them up so they are ready to use and easy to find when you need them.
- To better evaluate your gardening successes, keep weather records along with garden records. The most important items to report are daily minimum and maximum temperatures, precipitation, cloud cover and frost occurrences. (MJF)

Annual Vines in the Landscape

Annual flowering vines are useful for many locations around the home landscape. They add new interest to the yard area when grown on a fence, lattice, arbor or trellis. Annual vines climb by twining around a support or by clinging with tendrils. They grow rapidly to form an attractive mass of foliage and flowers.

Morning glory is one of the most colorful vines you can plant. Brilliant flowers are available in white and shades of

blue, pink, purple and red. The flowers are four inches across and are borne freely on vines which may grow to a height of 12 to 15 feet tall. Morning glories grow best on a well-drained soil in a warm, sunny location.

Trailing nasturtiums grow four or five feet tall. They bloom profusely and producing fragrant flowers in shades of red and yellow. The plants perform best in well drained soil and full sun.



Morning glory



Scarlet runner bean

grow 6 to 8 feet tall in full sun.

Cardinal climber is a lovely flowering vine. It has dark green, palm-like leaves and bright crimson red flowers.

Gourds have rather inconspicuous flowers, but produce colorful fruit which are ornamental on the vine during late summer. The fruit may be dried for fall and winter arrangements. (MJF)

Scarlet runner bean is an edible ornamental suitable for trellising. Rosy scarlet flowers top long twining vines. The pods are very ornamental.

The sweet pea has a delicate, colorful flower that has a honey-orange blossom scent. These vines will



Scarlet runner bean

Blue Flowers for the Garden

Blue is a cool and calming color. Many gardeners look for plants that have blue flowers to plant with other complementary colors, such as white, violet, grey, pink and yellow. Here are a few plants that will grow in Southeast Nebraska that have blue flowers.

Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) This woodland flower blooms in the spring. This perennial has nodding clusters of blue, bell-shaped flowers. It grows best in shady areas of the garden. The plants grow from 1 to 2 feet tall and spread about a foot. They go dormant in summer, so I like them near hostas or other perennials that cover the space later. Virginia bluebells are cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9.

Blue corydalis (*Corydalis flexuosa*) This is a wonderful woodland plant that thrives in shade and moist soil, but also grows in full sun. The flowers bloom in neat clumps in mid to late spring. The plant has a lovely fernlike foliage. Blue corydalis is a perennial and hardy in USDA zones 5 to 8.

Heartleaf brunnera (*Brunnera macrophylla*) This spring bloomer prefers moist, shady areas. The leaves are heart shaped and the flowers are light blue. It will grow from 12 to 15 inches high with a 15 inch spread. Brunnera is cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8.

Crested iris (*Iris cristata*) This little iris is native to North America. It prefers part shade and well-drained soil. Clumps of

crested iris grow 3 to 6 inches tall. Crested iris is cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8.

Balloon flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) This reliable perennial emerges in late spring and blooms all summer. Bell shaped flowers open from balloon-shaped buds. It grows best in moist well drained soil. Plants reach a mature height of about 2 feet.

Other blue flowering plants include monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*), bugloss (*Anchusa azurea*), blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*), bellflower (*Campanula* spp.), delphinium (*Delphinium elatum*), gentian (*Gentiana* spp.), Stokes' aster (*Stokesia laevis*) and veronica (*Veronica* spp.). (MJF)