



A “Stinky Story” - Controlling Wild Garlic in Home Lawns

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We are getting plenty of questions about controlling winter weeds in home lawns. One especially pesky winter weed comes to mind during this time. Actually, you may be seeing a combination of wild garlic and wild onions around your lawn or even out in pastures. If you’ve ever drank milk from a cow that has eaten either of these, you know why they are a problem in pastures. The milk smells just like them!

Anyway, wild garlic is a cool-season perennial weed with slender, hollow round leaves. The plant gets its energy from white bulbs (kind of like miniature onions). These bulbs will grow “offset bulb lets.” Before you know it, wild garlic can spread everywhere. As I said, it can be found in the lawn, garden, athletic fields or pastures. It has a distinctive garlic odor when crushed or mowed.

Wild onion can be found in the same places as wild garlic. The two are different though. Wild onion does not produce the offset bulb lets. There is almost no need to try and pull or dig either of them up. With the garlic you almost always break off a piece of one of the tiny bulbs and a new plant will form. It also reproduces by seed, which does not help in controlling it. Because of their bulbs and the fact that wild garlic can reproduce from seed also, you have to be committed over the long term to successfully control them.

There are several pesticides that can help you safely and effectively control these two problem weeds. Again, you have to use these pesticides as the label says and include them in a three year program for best results. One of the best products to use is Image, which has the active ingredient imazaquin. It is labeled for use in *established* bermuda, centipede, St. Augustine, and zoysia. Other turfgrasses, including fescue, can be severely injured by Image. In addition to controlling wild garlic/onions, Image controls annual sedges, yellow nutsedge and purple nutsedge. Remember, if you use Image, **do not** apply it when the grass is emerging from winter dormancy. Also, **do not** apply it to newly planted or sprigged turfgrasses. As with any pesticide product, be sure that you follow the label directions carefully and be safe.

There are obviously other herbicides that can help. Each situation is different and recommendations can be adjusted to fit more appropriately to your lawn. So the “stinky story” on wild garlic and onion is: you can win the war. You, as they say, just have to pick your battles. Incorporate the proper herbicide into a good fertility and maintenance program. Be patient. It will take a few years, but you can get rid of these “odorous” weeds!

For more information on lawn weed control and pesticide use information, contact the Burke County Extension Office at (706) 554-2119.