

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

CORNELL Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



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Recognizing Broadleaf Weeds in the Lawn

Black Medic

Black medic, an annual, is often called “black clover.” The leaves, with very few exceptions, are similar to clover. Its flowers are yellow and their tightly coiled black pods contain a single seed when mature. Its stems are prostrate and branched, forming low mats. Low nitrogen causes black medic. Check fertility.



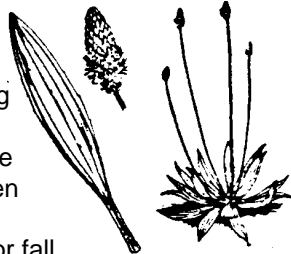
Common Chickweed

Common chickweed is an annual or winter annual that reproduces and spreads not only by seeds, but by rooting at the nodes of the stem. This weed thrives best in early spring or late autumn during cool, moist weather. It does not grow well during hot weather, except in moist or shady situations. Its presence is a sign of inadequate turf cover. The leaves are small, opposite and pointed at the tips. Shade will increase chickweed by thinning turf. Cut back tree branches to increase light.



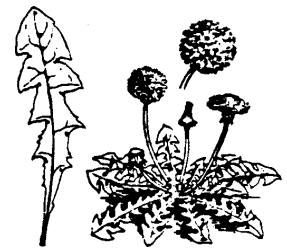
Buckhorn

Narrow-leaf plantain, often called buckhorn, is a perennial weed. Its thick, fleshy roots develop numerous lateral rootlets that make it difficult to eradicate by hand. Even small pieces that may be left behind are capable of forming new plants. It is a prolific seeder, producing many hundreds of seeds per plant. The seedheads, which develop in late spring and summer, often escape the reel mower and become unsightly. Compaction often leads to plantain invasion. Core aerate in spring and/or fall.



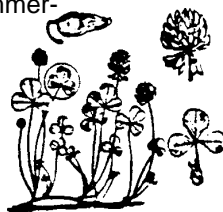
Dandelions

These are perennial weeds that need no introduction. There are two species, and both may exist in the same lawn. They have long, fleshy roots that, if not completely extricated, usually start new growth. On the credit side, their young leaves are used as salad greens and their flowers make an acceptable wine. Thin turf will have many dandelions. Check fertility.



Clover

Clover is often considered a troublesome perennial pest. It attracts bees, a serious threat to those who are allergic to their sting. Clover is soft and slippery to walk on. It stains clothing more than other grasses. Since it grows in patches, it often breaks up the continuity of an evenly textured lawn. Many people like clover during the summertime when lawn grasses tend to become somewhat dormant. Sometimes, it is the only plant left after chinch bugs invade. Low nitrogen or a dry year may bring on an outbreak of clover.



Plantains

There are two species of perennial broad-leaved plantains. *Plantago rugelii* is generally larger and smoother than *Plantago major* and its leaves tend to have wavy margins with purplish petioles. Compaction can cause an increase in plantains. Core aerate in spring and/or fall.



C-2-2 MTC TTY revised RT 1/03

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

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Knotweed

Knotweed is an annual pest that germinates in late winter to early spring, or about the same time grass greens up in the spring. It grows so close to the ground that it gives a turf-like appearance when mowed. Before it is killed by the frost, it sets a new crop of seed to reinfest the soil for the following season. Patches of this weed have a red-brown color after killing frosts.

It thrives in hard, trampled areas that are subject to excessive compaction. Core aerate several times a year and incorporate organic matter.



Red Sorrel (Sheep Sorrel)

The name sorrel, signifying sour, is applied to a number of unrelated plants that have a bitter acid principal in their roots, stems or leaves. This weed spreads readily in lawns and gardens because of its perennial, running rootstocks. It is particularly vigorous in soils that are acid and low in plant nutrients - naturally or because of under-fertilization. In the spring, the plant develops branching stalks of tiny flowers. The female flowers are reddish brown. Red sorrel indicates a neglected lawn. Proper maintenance such as keeping pH, nutrients and moisture levels in the proper range will help. Low pH leads to sorrel increase. Check pH and add appropriate amounts of lime.



Mouse-ear Chickweed

Mouse-ear chickweed is a low-creeping perennial with very hairy leaves shaped like a mouse's ear. It is usually a darker green than common chickweed. The creeping stems run along the soil surface, where they sometimes form dense mats and destroy the

grass. Flowers appear at the tips of the branches. Shade will bring on chickweed in thin turf. Increase light by cutting back any tree branches.



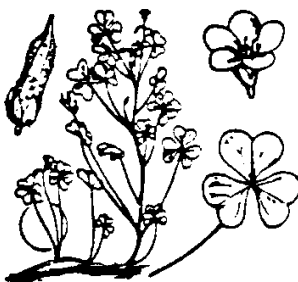
Prostrate Spurge

Prostrate spurge is an annual weed that grows in well-nourished lawns or gardens and branches freely. It forms broad mats that eventually smother grass. The leaves vary from dark green to red, but generally bear purplish-brown blotches on the upper surface. An easy way to identify this weed is to tear off a leaf stem or shoot; it will bleed a milky juice. Spurge indicates a dry year or a dry spot. Increase soil moisture.



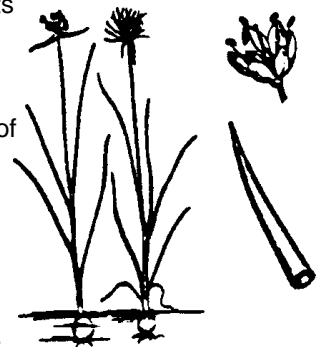
Oxalis (Yellow Wood Sorrel)

This is a persistent perennial weed. The plant is upright but will root at the lower nodes. The heart-shaped leaves resemble clover. They are usually pale green. Other species can be reddish or purplish. The small yellowish flowers have 5 petals. Seedpods are distinctly elongated; when ripe and dry, the slightest touch will send the seeds flying for several feet. Dry soils will cause an increase in yellow wood sorrel.



Wild Garlic

Often referred to as "wild onion," it's not a broadleaf weed, but is controlled by the same materials. Crushed or cut plant parts have the typical strong onion odor. It produces underground bulbs and bulblets. Green clumps of this weed are frequently noticeable in the very early spring. Repeated low mowing, early in the season before grass has broken dormancy, can help to reduce wild garlic.



Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM)

A healthy, densely growing lawn will usually have fewer weeds than a lawn with many bare spots. Therefore, spot seeding any open areas will reduce the chances of weed seeds being blown onto the lawn. If an herbicide is necessary, it is best to spot treat individual weeds instead of treating the entire lawn.

WHENEVER YOU USE A PESTICIDE, ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.