

Controlling Wild Garlic in Mississippi Lawns



Figure 1. Wild garlic (*Allium vineale*) is a common plant in Mississippi lawns and landscapes.

Wild garlic (*Allium vineale*) is a plant commonly found in Mississippi lawns and landscapes during winter. Wild garlic and the related species wild onion (*Allium canadense*) are almost indistinguishable from a distance. When crushed, both wild garlic and onion release a distinctive “garlicky” or “alliaceous” odor. Both *Allium* species are cool-season perennials that sprout from underground bulbs every fall. They appear taller than most turf stands and are usually considered weeds.

Nonchemical Weed Management

Nonchemical control strategies require an integration of best management practices. For more information, see *Establish and Manage Your Home Lawn* or *Managing Mississippi Sports Fields*.

Hand pulling young, emerging plants, along with their underground bulbs, is only moderately effective since it is impossible to remove all bulbs without excavating

with a hand trowel. Mowing before flower formation has limited effectiveness since most populations reproduce mainly by bulb formation rather than by seed set and because they are adapted to low mowing height.

Proper grass selection for the expected environmental conditions and use scenarios is a key cultural management strategy. Factors that should be considered most often include shade and inherent soil properties (such as pH, nutrient holding capacity, and internal drainage). Other factors that may limit turf health include traffic from athletic activities, insect and diseases pests, and herbicide injury.

Maintaining turf density throughout the spring, summer, and fall growing seasons with adequate soil moisture and nutrient management is also critical to suppressing winter-emerging weeds like wild garlic/onion.

Chemical Weed Management

Chemical control strategies are effective when combined with proper cultural management of the desired turfgrass species. For instance, application of herbicide alone rarely provides long-term control, but in combination with mowing, broadleaf weeds like wild garlic are more easily controlled.

Herbicides containing auxin-mimicking active ingredients, such as 2,4-D, dicamba, mecoprop, MCPP, MCPA, quinclorac, and others, provide modest control of wild garlic when applied alone but are more effective when applied in combinations. Commercial products that

include three and four different active ingredients may be available at specialty and retail stores. Examples of “three-ways” include Escalade 2, Trimec, Trimec Southern, and Strike-3. Examples of “four-ways” include 4-Speed, Avenue South, Speedzone Southern, and Redzone. A number of homeowner-available products mimic these three- and four-way combinations: Ortho Weed B Gon, Ortho Weed B Gon for Southern Lawns, Ortho Weed B Gon Max plus Crabgrass Control, Monterey Crab-E-Rad Plus, Ferti-lome Weed-Out Lawn Weed Killer, Enforcer Weed Shot Lawn Weed Killer Concentrate, Spectracide Weed Stop Weed Killer for Lawns, Southern Ag Lawn Weed Killer, Bayer

Table 1. Estimated control of wild garlic/onion with standard commercial home-lawn herbicide treatments and their safety on desirable turfgrass species.¹

Example trade name	Active ingredient(s)	Safety on desirable turfgrass species								Est. control
		Bermuda	Carpet	Centipede	Seashore paspalum	St. Augustine	Zoysia	Perennial ryegrass	Tall fescue	
2,4-D	2,4-D	Yes	Potential injury	Not recommended	Potential injury	Potential injury	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fair
Avenue South	penoxsulam, sulfentrazone, dicamba, 2,4-D	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
Blindside	metsulfuron, sulfentrazone	Yes	No	Yes	No guidance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Excellent
Celsius	dicamba, iodosulfuron thiencazone	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Excellent
Certainty	sulfosulfuron	Yes	No guidance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Excellent
Dicamba	dicamba	Yes	No guidance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fair
Escalade 2	2,4-D, fluroxypyr, dicamba	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
Image	imazaquin	Yes	No guidance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Excellent
Manor or MSM-Turf	metsulfuron	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not recommended	Potential injury	Excellent
Monument	trifloxysulfuron	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Excellent
Sedge-hammer	halosulfuron	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fair
Speedzone Southern	carfentrazone, 2,4-D, mecoprop, dicamba	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
Trimec/ Strike-3/ Vessel/ others	2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP	Yes	Potential injury	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
Trimec Southern	2,4-D, dicamba, MCPA	Yes	Potential injury	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good

¹Safety is inferred based upon use at labelled rates. Always read and follow label directions.

Advanced Southern Weed Killer, Bonide Weed Killer, and many others.

Non-auxin-mimicking herbicides like Certainty (sulfosulfuron), Image (imazaquin), and Monument (trifloxysulfuron) are also commonly available for homeowner and professional use. They provide excellent control of wild garlic. Certainty, Image, and Monument may also be applied to control various sedge and broadleaf species in warm-season turf. These herbicides must be applied in combination with a nonionic surfactant to obtain satisfactory control.

Metsulfuron-methyl provides excellent control of wild garlic and is available for homeowner use as Martin's Top Shot and Scott's Spot Weed Control. Commercial applicators will be familiar with MSM-Turf, Manor, and Blade, all of which contain metsulfuron. Blindside (metsulfuron plus sulfentrazone) is another commercial product that provides excellent wild garlic control. These herbicides will also require use of a nonionic surfactant for satisfactory control.

Caution! Carpetgrass, Centipedegrass, Seashore Paspalum, and St. Augustinegrass are more susceptible to herbicide injury than Bermuda and zoysia grasses. Be careful when applying any herbicide to sensitive grass species or in weakened or thinned turf. Label recommendations should clearly state whether your desired turf is tolerant to the intended herbicide and rate. Temperature at time of spraying and during the control phase may limit or enhance injury. Days when temperatures are below 55 degrees may delay weed control. Days when temperatures are greater than 85 degrees may enhance turfgrass injury, especially in sensitive turf species. For these reasons, most labels encourage use at temperatures between 55 and 80 degrees.

Reference

Small, Z. D., J. D. McCurdy, E. D. Begitschke, and M. P. Richard. 2019. *Herbicides for Control of Wild Garlic in Turfgrass*. HortTechnology 29(6):838-841. doi.org/10.21273/HORTTECH04379-19



Figure 2. Wild garlic appears taller than most turf stands and may be considered a weed by turfgrass managers and homeowners.

Publication 3511 (POD-8-20)

By Jay McCurdy, PhD, Extension Turfgrass Specialist, Assistant Professor, Department of Plant and Soil Sciences.



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Produced by Agricultural Communications.

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director