



Broadleaf Lawn Weeds

Many lawns in New Hampshire are infested with one or more broadleaf weeds. This may be from planting a new lawn on soil infested with weed seeds; sowing weedy, low-quality grass seed; or using manure contaminated with weed seeds. Established lawns may become infested with weeds as a result of low fertility, improper watering or by mowing too close – at less than one inch.

Proper care will prevent or eliminate weeds. Fumigating the topsoil or cultivating the seedbed several times prior to planting will help. Using a hay mulch at seeding often restricts weed seed germination while allowing grass seedlings to emerge. The first mowing will eliminate most annual weeds from a new lawn. They usually don't survive clipping.

In established lawns, adequate fertilizer, infrequent but heavy soakings, and frequent mowing no closer than 1 1/2 inches will provide a thick, vigorous turf, discourage weed seedling establishment and help eliminate any perennial weeds that have invaded your lawn.

Dandelion (*Taraxicum officinale* Weber) is probably the most common lawn weed. This perennial spreads mostly by seeds, but sometimes from lateral off-shoots from the main, deep taproot. It produces bright yellow flowers – in early spring in protected areas – and continues flowering until frost. Seeds become airborne in a breeze and a single dandelion bloom can infest many square yards of lawn.

Control by cutting off the plant below the crown, removing as much of the taproot as possible. An asparagus knife works well.

Plantains Broadleaf plantain (*Plantago major* L.) and English, buckhorn or narrowleaf plantain (*P. lanceolata* L.) are both perennials spreading from seeds and somewhat by shoots from the roots. Control by mowing at any stage beyond seeding (rosette) stage of growth.

Ground Ivy, also known as Gill-over-the-ground or Creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea* L.), grows in shady areas, a perennial spread mostly by underground root stalks and creeping stems, but occasionally by seeds. Stems are smooth and square in cross-section and root from the joints. Flowers are purple. Control by proper fertilizer use, frequent mowing and by providing more sunlight, if possible.

Knotweed Prostrate knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare* L.) is an annual spread only by seed that germinates in the early spring. Plants form a very low, prostrate mat difficult to mow out. Improved lawn vigor can help eliminate it.

Heal-All (*Prunella vulgaris* L.) is a perennial, spread by seeds and short rootstocks. When growing prostrate, it has stems that sometimes root at the node. Control by digging out patches, by repeated mowing and by stimulating good grass growth.

Chickweeds Annual or common chickweed (*Stellaria media* L. Cyrill) spreads by seeds and by rooting at the stem joints. This weed dies out with fall frost. Perennial or mouse-ear chickweed spreads from seed but mostly by creeping rootstocks. Its prostrate stems form a dense mat crowding out grass. Control with good management.

Chemical controls for these and other broadleaf lawn weeds are available. For current, approved herbicide recommendations, call UNH Cooperative Extension's Info Line, 1-877-398-4769, weekdays 9AM - 2 PM.

adapted 3/01 from a fact sheet by Leonard P. Perry, Extension Ornamental Horticulturist, University of Vermont Extension

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