



Fall Weed Control

By Robert Moloney, CCA-ON

Even though the crop is about to come off, don't forget about weed control in your fields. Something that you should do in each field after harvest is assess how your weed control program worked this year and MAKE NOTES, field by field, of what weeds you have. Notes that you take now, will help you to plan your weed control programs for next spring.

Over the winter, you should take the time to ensure that the herbicide programs and timing of applications you intend to use next year will be effective on the weed spectrum you have. Certain weeds, like nutsedge, are best controlled with pre-plant incorporated (PPI) herbicides and obviously you will need to plan for this prior to planting. Other weeds, such as yellow foxtail and crabgrass, are also easier and more consistently controlled by PPI or pre-emerge control programs versus post-emerge programs. Having notes will also allow you to pick the appropriate products for a pre-emerge applications since you won't be able to scout the field in spring to see what weeds you need to control.

Another important thing to look at this fall is what perennial weeds you need to control.

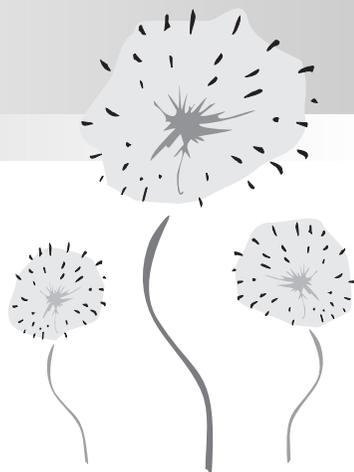
The advent of Glyphosate tolerant crops has certainly made perennial weed control easier in many fields, but fall control of these weeds can still be important. With moisture and some heat, there should be good re-growth in most cereal stubble fields. If there are thistles, twitchgrass, milkweed, or dandelions in these fields, wait for about 6" of new growth (three

new leaves on the twitch) and then spray them with a glyphosate product to reduce their numbers. Frost and cold weather over winter can help to finish off any plants that aren't completely killed since they should be stressed at the very least. Unfortunately, 100% control is usually not possible, so plan to come back after the remaining plants next year.

There are a couple of things to remember when spraying post-harvest. First, ideally you want a light rain to wash any chaff, dust, etc. off the weeds before spraying. This is only going to matter for prostrate weeds like dandelion; for other weeds you will need to wait for re-growth. You also need an actively growing weed to kill it. Milkweed and sow-thistles are very sensitive to frost and will shut down even after a light frost. These weeds need to be controlled early to avoid this. Dandelion and twitchgrass, on the other hand, can take a significant frost and still be controlled well, so later applications will work well on them.

It is also worth controlling winter annual weeds in the fall.

Things like chickweed, shepherd's purse, and white cockle are much easier to kill in the fall since they start growing very early in the spring and can quickly become too large or mature to kill. In most cases, a glyphosate product will control the widest range of weeds at a reasonable cost, but something like a 2,4-D product may work well if you only have a limited range of broadleaf weeds to control.



Don't forget about weed control in your fall-seeded crops.

Volunteer canola can be a problem weed in winter wheat, and may be worse in fields that had heavy cabbage seedpod weevil infestations due to premature shattering on some plants. Buctril M and Refine Extra are the only products registered for fall applications, and Ridgetown College research would suggest that other hormonal products can seriously damage yield (even without visual symptoms). The key for most consistent control is to kill the canola when it is as small as possible (ideally at 2-4 leaf). On the flip side, volunteer cereals can be very competitive with winter canola. Low rates of Venture L or Assure II are both very effective on this, but should be applied when the cereal plants are small and symptoms can be slow to appear once the weather cools down.

In conclusion, don't forget about weed control just because the crop is coming off. A little bit of scouting and planning now can make life easier in the spring. Don't forget to check your fall seeded crops for weeds that may need to be controlled. If you have any questions, or require assistance in weed identification or control recommendations, contact a Certified Crop Adviser in your area.

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This industry driven program helps ensure that Ontario crop producers are well served by those providing their crop production advice. This article was written by one of those CCA's.

