

Timing and persistence, important in chamberbitter control

Do you have the weed that resembles miniature mimosa trees? If so, you're not alone.

This common, troublesome weed is called chamberbitter or botanically *Phyllanthus urinaria*. It can be controlled with correct timing and persistence.

Chamberbitter is a summer annual that requires warm soil conditions to germinate. It has numerous, small, round fruit attached to the undersides of its leaf stems.

Attempt control measures before chamberbitter produces seed. Once the round fruit are seen on the leaf stems, successful control becomes difficult or impossible.

To begin the battle against chamberbitter, apply a preemergence herbicide around mid April to May 1st. This will be just before the seedlings germinate and emerge.

Atrazine (sold under various brand names) or isoxaben (Gallery) provides "good" preemergence control (defined as 80-90% efficacy) of chamberbitter. Isoxaben is safe for all of our warm-season lawn grasses. However, atrazine will injury or kill bahiagrass and bermudagrass. Atrazine is safe to use on centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass when used according to label directions.

Once the weeds have germinated, a postemergence herbicide may be necessary. Atrazine applied twice spaced approximately three weeks apart can be used in centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass lawns. Products containing mixtures of 2,4-D, dicamba and MCPP (such as Trimec Southern) applied twice, seven days apart may also be used at recommended rates. Some 2,4-D, dicamba and MCPP products will severely injure or possibly kill centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass but are safe in bermudagrass, bahiagrass and zoysiagrass lawns, based on label directions. Most herbicides are not safe to use in lawns during warmer summer temperatures. Always read and follow label directions and precautions when using any herbicide!

With the exception of isoxaben, do not use the herbicides mentioned above in plant beds. The following preemergence herbicides are useful in controlling chamberbitter in ornamental plantings: trifluralin + isoxaben (Snapshot TG), prodimine (Barricade) and isoxaben (Gallery). Once the weeds have germinated, your only postemergence options are glyphosate, non-selective herbicides, such as Roundup. When using a non-selective herbicide, be sure to protect your desirable plants, direct the spray to the weed only and prevent the spray from drifting onto your desirable ornamentals.

Pulling and disposing of the weeds is an option. But be sure to not shake the soil from the root system. This may spread the seeds. Appropriate use of mulch in plant beds can eliminate or reduce weed populations. It is very important that chamberbitter not be allowed to set seed by using all appropriate control methods.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, August 26, 2010