
Author: **Dchall_San_Antonio** [Mon Oct 27, 2003 9:59 am]
Post subject: **Nutgrass control - two new ideas**

Listening to our organic gurus on the radio this weekend, Bob Webster and Howard Garrett, they were talking about controlling nutgrass. I've posted before about controlling crabgrass with baking soda in the southern states, but have never heard of nutgrass being controlled by salts. Howard was saying that nutgrass was not salt tolerant and that bermuda was extremely salt tolerant. Then Bob reminded us of seeing St Augustine growing nearly into the surf all along the gulf coast. So that discussion was about using salts to control nutgrass in bermuda and St Augustine turf.

Then Bob shifted to other research he'd seen about controlling nutgrass with sugars. So they talked about mixing both baking soda and molasses to control the weed. Problem was that neither of them has a formula for how much of either to make a spray. They sort of closed the topic asking people to try different amounts of mixtures to see what works.

Personally, I don't have enough nutgrass to test anything on. I can actually dig mine out as it tries to invade my solid limestone rock driveway. But what about y'all? How should we do this? Can we divide up the alphabet and give everyone a different dose to try? How about this...everyone with last names starting from

A-D use 3 ounces of molasses per gallon of water and spray once a week. This is my standard molasses spray mix to cover 1,000 square feet of turf or as a general ornamental spray.

E-H use 6 ounces of molasses per gallon and spray once a week.
I-L use 9 ounces of molasses per gallon and spray once a week.

If we get any more molasses we're starting to clog the sprayers I fear.

M-P mix 1 TBSP of baking soda per QUART of water and spray weekly.
Q-T mix 2 TBSP of baking soda per quart and spray weekly.
U-Z mix 4 TBSP of baking soda per quart and spray weekly.

Then report back here and we'll move on to phase two where we mix the two ingredients together to see if there is any benefit. Be sure to leave some of the nutgrass unsprayed with anything. You have to have a "control" in your experiment. Or some of you may be blessed with enough nutgrass that you can try different mixtures in different areas and still have control plots.

What do you think? Can we give this a whirl?

Author: **chuckfranke** [Mon Oct 27, 2003 1:36 pm]

Post subject:

I might try 4 or 5 of the above in my two patches of the stuff and will let ya know.

Now that y'all took my MSMA away i gotta try something 😊

Author: **Enzyme11** [Mon Oct 27, 2003 9:14 pm]

Post subject:

Table salt works on nutgrass, as I implied in my MSMA/nutgrass post, but of course one has to be aware of the chance of salt buildup if it's misused. I'd prefer it if a more benign product, such as molasses, worked as well as salt. Sandy soil is more forgiving for salt applications because it's easier to leach through, but I really don't think that an effective table salt application would cause much problem in clay soil unless the soil already is borderline sodic. Even so, I'd hesitate to use table salt on an area that has low permeability. How much salt to use is another question. Also, I don't remember (or never knew) exactly how the salt works on nutgrass--whether it's the cation, the chloride, or mere ionic strength or osmolarity. Apparently, calcium chloride and sodium chlorate works as well as sodium chloride, but I don't know about potassium chloride because I don't know offhand if there's something about the plant physiology that would limit KCl's efficacy. (For all I know, the other salts may work by messing with the plant's potassium usage.) If potassium chloride works, it probably would be a better choice than sodium chloride for the Texas clay soils. One would think that nutgrass would have a tough time in high calcium soils if the cation is the functional part and if calcium chloride works as a control. We know nutgrass generally doesn't have much trouble with high calcium soils, but I suppose a more concentrated ionic form of Ca could have an effect that soil calcium carbonate does not. I restit the notion that chloride alone is the operative agent because the idea conjures up the notion of people pouring bleach on their yard. For now, I'll leave this as an open investigation until we gather more information on field tests or on the operational mechanism. As the Dirt Doctor wrote in the Weeds forum, it may be that the more benign carbonate form of potassium or sodium is effective. If so, that would be better than the chloride salts.

To those who run tests on nutgrass, it would be best to use patches that are distinct and removed from each other. Otherwise, the rhizome-distribution across the area might/would make it hard to distinguish the results between the test applications.

Author: **Mr. Clean** [Wed Oct 29, 2003 12:51 pm]

Post subject:

This is not intended as thread hijack, but rather as a followup to Enzyme11's comment on the use of table salt for vegetation control. I have read a recommendation for the use of table salt as a preventative for grass/weeds in the voids of a sidewalk/driveway. Has anyone tried this method? Results?
Downsides?

Author: **chuckfranke** [Wed Oct 29, 2003 9:50 pm]

Post subject:

Can someone explain for me how molasses would hurt nutgrass? I'll paint it on with a paintbrush full strength if that will work to kill it, heck, i used to do that with MSMA before Enzyme and Nadine gave me an organic b@#\$ slapping (That's a joke guys, smile).

Seriously - I introduced molasses to my compost, yard and teas a few weeks ago on KKitch's suggestion and it is impressive stuff... I am trying to figure out how/why it would kill nutgrass.

FWIW - OK, I am sold... I went back and researched MSMA a little more and I don't like the metabolites so I have gotten rid of the last of my chemicals.... the geek in me needs to understand the process by which the various control methods will work.

PS> Tried a little concentrated sea salt (aquarium pharmaceuticals instant ocean) on the nutgrass in one of my stepping stone paths - total wipeout in 48 hrs above ground. Now I plan to flush it heavily with water and see how long before the Bermuda re-establishes there. Dry sea-salt formulations are quite alkaline as well as being salty so I am assuming it basically collapsed and dissolved the cell walls in the nutgrass, this is not any big revelation, dry sea salt will kill anything - very corrosive stuff - but the test will be how long it takes the Bermuda to re-emerge in the crevices.... may need to wait til Spring for a fair test. Just bought a reel mower so i can keep the TIF Bermuda as short as I want it and at 1/4-1/2" it seems to choke out everything but nutsedge.

Author: **Dchall_San_Antonio** [Thu Oct 30, 2003 1:22 pm]

Post subject:

If you overdose the soil with sodium, you might try some Epsom salts to rebalance the soil. There is a key balance between sodium, magnesium, and calcium. I have no clue what the balance is, but there are smart people who tell

me that stuff.

Molasses. Why might that work against nutgrass? I'll take a guess that there are bacteria and fungi on the leaves that get out of their normal balance with the extra sugar. I'll go on to guess that a fungus takes over and kills off the top of the plant. Whether it has any effect on the nuts is a different story.

Any other ideas?

Author: **Enzyme11** [Fri Oct 31, 2003 7:59 am]

Post subject:

chuckfranke wrote:

Tried a little concentrated sea salt (aquarium pharmaceuticals instant ocean) on the nutgrass in one of my stepping stone paths - total wipeout in 48 hrs above ground. Now I plan to flush it heavily with water and see how long before the Bermuda re-establishes there. Dry sea-salt formulations are quite alkaline as well as being salty- but the test will be how long it takes the Bermuda to re-emerge in the crevices.

What do you figure the pH of that sea salt is? I've seen sea salt listed as high as 8.0, but that may have been only for culinary salt. (If your soil is ordinary black and white north Texas clay, the ambient pH probably is between 7 and 8 already.) If the salt pH is very high, maybe 10-12, it might not hurt to flush the area with some dilute vinegar at the end of the project. If you're in a sandy/acidic soil pocket, that probably wouldn't be necessary. I suppose I would water the area lightly (unless it's already in a sprinkler path) to drive the salt down to try to reach any unsprouted nutlets. Then, give them time to absorb the salt before doing a heavy flush. A good rain might foul up that plan, but I suppose a person could cover the area if it isn't too large (which it probably is). I don't know whether there might be nutlets under the stones that could send shoots out to the open areas; if there are, the direct salt application may not reach those spots. That would be another reason to allow the salt to linger some in the topsoil, but I don't know if it's a sufficient reason. As an aside, maybe seeding Bermuda in those cracks after you've finished with the salt would speed the grass recovery; maybe it's late in the year for that.

I've had some back channel discussion about applying a mix of salt and 20% acetic acid together, but I don't favor that approach in theory. One objection is that the acid might inhibit salt sorption by breaking up the cell walls. That may not be true; it may be that the acid has no effect on sorption or that the cell wall attack aids absorption. Regardless of the effect on the foliage, it's the underground runners and bulbs that we want to affect. The other objection is that a balanced rx of NaCl + acetic acid --> sodium acetate + hydrochloric acid (with sea salt, the constituent NaBr "should" yield sodium acetate + HBr). I don't know

how/whether sodium acetate would affect the plant--maybe it's even more effective than the NaCl form. Of course, the in situ results could be unexpected and very different, hence my sig line. ☺

Author: **chuckfranke** [Mon Nov 03, 2003 10:17 am]

Post subject:

Quote:

Of course, the in situ results could be unexpected and very different, hence my sig line.

In theory, theory and practice are the same; in practice, they aren't -- lament of the synthetic lifestyle.

LOL, sounds like my misguided Longhorn fan friends who keep telling me that on paper they are better than my Sooners... but on GRASS OU wins by 8 touchdowns.

I think the sea salt comes in around 8.2 PH but would have to check, very hydrophylic stuff - if you spill some on the carpet you have a permanent wet spot.

The Nutgrass has yet to re-emerge in that location but the Bermuda is going right back in. Bermuda is on heckuva ferocious weed.

Back to the molasses - how/why would that kill nutgrass? David's idea makes sense but I gather Enzyme might have some data here too????

Author: **chuckfranke** [Mon Nov 10, 2003 1:59 pm]

Post subject: **Bump**

Bumping this up...

Salt is working on the nutgrass for me but I am doing it kinda labor intensive - making it very concentrated and dripping a little into that nice little droplet holder where the leaves meet the stem. No effect on the nearby Bermuda but not sure if it is killin the 'nut' as well.

Oh well, if one of the toddlers in the neighborhood takes a clump and decides it looks tasty they won't keel over and die from a little salt.

Anyone know for sure why molasses would work? Considering going over each dead-on-top one and hitting it with molasses by the drip. makes sense that it

would accelerate the decomposition. If I can teach soldier flies to eat the stuff we got a strategy.

Author: **khwoz** [Mon Nov 10, 2003 6:04 pm]

Post subject: **bump**

From what I've heard & read, the molasses overstimulates & rots the nut grass. The weaker grasses & weeds can't handle fertile lawns. This is per Howard; never tested it myself.

Author: **Bill in Arlington** [Mon Apr 02, 2007 5:58 pm]

Post subject: **Anything new**

I have a real good crop of nutgrass in my beds. A lot more than last year. Is there an update from this info in 2003?

Author: **Dchall_San_Antonio** [Wed Apr 04, 2007 8:23 am]

Post subject:

No updates that I'm aware of, not that I'm aware of everything that's happened in 4 years. I think I'll set this up on a more active forum and see if I can get some people experimenting with it.

Author: **Bill in Arlington** [Wed Apr 04, 2007 1:10 pm]

Post subject: **Ready to help**

I have realitive new beds (2years) and have only established them and not finished planting. The beds were origianlly built by Rednta's in Arlington. I pulled and dug weeds last summer and added corn gultenmeal and dry molesses and cover with cedar mulch. This spring I have the best crop of nutgrass, more than ever before. So i am willing to try an experiment. I have several hundred square feet of beds. Just let me know what you think.

Author: **Dchall_San_Antonio** [Wed Apr 04, 2007 2:43 pm]

Post subject:

With all that space you might try several appoaches.

1. 6 ounces of molasses in a gallon of water as a soil drench. I don't know why it might work, but that's the suggestion.

2. 1 TBSP of baking soda in a gallon and soil drench. Bear in mind that a soil

drench of baking soda will require a restoration of all the fungi in the soil. I would follow up in 2 weeks with compost and organic fertilizer.

3. Table salt as suggested above.

Author: **Bill in Arlington** [Mon Apr 09, 2007 9:41 am]
Post subject: **Nutgrass control**

Since I have so much space, I was thinking about 2 foot square, one for each suggestion. Is 4 square feet to much for 1 gallon of drench. I was going to put them in three different locations and then still have room where nothing was done as a control. What do you think.

Thanks

Bill

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