



UNIVERSITY *of* CALIFORNIA

Agriculture & Natural Resources

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION • YOLO COUNTY

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PREEMERGENTS

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Introduction

Springtime is a beautiful season of the year. Our gardens burst with color but also with weeds! Removing weeds from our lawns and flowerbeds can be a lot of hard work. However, there is a way to prevent those weeds from sprouting in the first place. You can use a type of herbicide called a *preemergent*. Preemergents form a chemical barrier on the soil surface to prevent weeds from emerging. Generally, there is no effect on your existing plants or those that you plant later. Be sure to read the label for directions on how to use the product and its plant compatibility.

Lawns

Some weeds such as oxalis and crabgrass are difficult to control in your lawn after they emerge (sprout) so using preemergents may be more effective. To keep spring season weeds like oxalis and dandelions from appearing apply preemergent products containing the active ingredient pendimethalin between January 1 and 15. Applying a second application of pendimethalin between May 1 and 15 can prevent crabgrass, spurge, and other warm season weeds. By applying each year you will have a lawn that has few weeds.

Flower Beds

In flowerbeds preemergents may be applied anytime there is bare soil that is susceptible to weed growth. Preemergent products for flowerbeds have active ingredients such as oryzalin, trifluralin, and benefin. These products come as dry granules but oryzalin also comes in liquid form. The first application should be made in the fall after you have cleaned out your beds and before the rainy season begins. This will control the hard-to-kill annual bluegrass, which quickly sprouts after it rains. Other applications of preemergents may be made when they lose potency, or when the soil is disturbed (read label instructions). By using preemergents you will be spending much less time pulling weeds in your garden!

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