The time is finally here. It feels as though it has been a long time in coming. You may now officially start your weed control practices on your centipede lawns. Ready, set, kill the weeds! May is the ideal time to take care of your late spring and summer weed problems in your centipede grass lawns. Many of you are probably thinking that I am a little slow, but that is ok. I get that a lot!

Centipede grass is one of the easiest grasses to maintain… IF you leave it alone. The minute that you start fussing with centipede, it starts to get picky. Centipede grass does not like lime, it does not like herbicides, and it does not like lots of fertilizer. So, what can you do to your lawn in the spring? Mow. Water. Repeat.

As centipede grass comes out of dormancy in the spring, it is very susceptible to damage from herbicides and fertilizers. Do not fall victim to the marketing industry trap of a “weed & feed” product. These products force new growth with high nitrogen fertilizers that is weak and very susceptible to damage. Then you add the herbicide piece and all that new weak growth is stunted and yellow.

When centipede grass first comes out of dormancy, the best plan of attack is to keep it watered at about an inch a week and mow taking no more than one third of the leaf blade off at any one time. By the time May arrives your lawn should be fully green and showing signs of runners forming to fill in dead spots. Use a 2,4-D or atrazine product labeled for use on centipede grass. Make sure you read the label and follow it closely. Do not under any circumstances use more herbicide than is recommended. Not only can this kill your grass, but also it is against the law to use any pesticide not according to the label.

Now that you have taken care of your weed problem, it is time to think about fertilization in June. Technically you should be completing an annual soil sample and sending it to the NCDA & CS for testing. This is free in the state of North Carolina and it will tell you exactly how much fertilizer you should add in your specific situation. If you have not completed a soil sample and you are ready to fertilize in June, there is a blanket recommendation of about a half - pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. Utilize a high potassium fertilizer like 5-5-15 to do this.
So, go ahead kill those weeds and get ready to fertilize in a few weeks. If you would like a copy of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Lawn maintenance calendar, contact me, Kerrie Roach, horticultural Extension agent, at North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, by phone at 910-671-3276 or by E-mail at Kerrie_Roach@ncsu.edu. For insect alerts and other horticultural news, follow me on Twitter @RoachBuggie. For additional information about North Carolina Cooperative Extension, visit our website at Robeson.ces.ncsu.edu.