

CREEPING CHARLIE CONTROL

Despite our cool spring, Creeping Charlie is alive and well in many lawns already. Also known as ground ivy, Creeping Charlie is a broadleaf lawn weed that is difficult to control.

Creeping Charlie is hard to control because you can't pull it easily in lawns and many commercial broadleaf lawn weed killers have little or no affect on it. The most common active ingredient in granular and liquid broadleaf lawn weed killers is 2,4-D, but 2,4-D has little affect on ground ivy.

Dicamba, is an active ingredient that does control ground ivy. Dicamba is also called Banvel. There are several lawn weed killer products available that contain dicamba. Most of them also contain 2,4-D. However, you may still need to make repeat applications with dicamba-containing products to completely control ground ivy.

The following tips will help in your attempts to control ground ivy in your lawn:

- Mow your grass high, about two and one-half inches. This helps your grass compete better with Creeping Charlie and other weeds. Your lawn is more likely to be weedy if you consistently cut grass too short.
- Keep your lawn vigorous through proper fertilizing, watering and mowing. Vigorous lawns compete better with weeds.
- Even with a dicamba-containing product, you will probably need to make repeat applications to control Creeping Charlie. In fact, it may take you a full season or more to control it completely. To add to the difficulty, you should not use dicamba-containing products in the root zone areas of shallow-rooted trees and shrubs since the chemical can damage these plants.
- Broadleaf weeds, like ground ivy, are easiest to control when actively growing. This is when they are able to quickly absorb the weed killer. The best times to control Creeping Charlie are in mid to late spring, early June, and in early fall, from late August through the end of September. Early fall is actually the best time to control most broadleaf weeds because they are usually growing vigorously, and the weeds you don't kill with the weed killer are often weakened enough to die over winter. Also, there are fewer problems with weed killer drift onto desirable landscape and garden plants in fall. For best ground ivy control, apply weed killers in the fall.
- The more leaf surface there is, the more weed killer the weeds absorb. Avoid mowing too soon before or after you apply weed killers. Apply the weed killer several days after mowing, and wait at least two days after you apply it before you mow again.
- Don't use broadleaf weed killers too late in the fall, after it stops growing, or during a summer drought, when it goes temporarily dormant.
- Liquid weed killer products tend to be more effective than granular or dry products, including the granular weed-and-feed products, because they give better leaf surface coverage.
- Follow weed killer label directions carefully. You'll get better results if you choose the right chemical and mix, apply and store it properly.