

**Central New York
Lawns, Landscapes & Gardens
Facts**

Central New York Lawns, Landscapes & Gardens Facts are a series of fact sheets that address a wide range of lawn, landscape, garden and houseplant concerns published by Terry L. Ettinger Horticulture Consulting Services. The purpose of this series is to provide readers with timely, practical and unbiased information specific to Central New York conditions and is based on Ettinger's popular "Let's Get Growing" column that's appeared from March through November in the Eagle Group of community newspapers every year since 1993.

Individual copies of each fact sheet in the series are free upon request. Quantity discounts for educational and commercial purposes are available upon request.

Opinions, questions, concerns and subscription requests are always welcome. Please write to Terry Ettinger, 119 Concord Place, Syracuse, New York 13210-2649. You may also send your comments and questions via e-mail to: Terry@tlehcs.com, or call 315-471-5854.

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All do-it-yourself activities involve a degree of risk. Skills, materials, tools, and site conditions vary widely. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the reader remains responsible for the selection and use of tools, materials, and methods. Always obey local codes and laws, follow manufacturers' operating instructions, and observe safety precautions at all times. Please read all labels carefully before purchasing, applying and storing any pesticide.

Watch

"Garden Journeys" on Time Warner Cable's News 10 Now every Wednesday and Saturday between 5:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at :45 past the hour.

Listen

"The Weeder's Digest" on A.M. 570 WSYR Saturday mornings at 11:00.

Read

"Let's Get Growing" every week in the Eagle Group of Community Newspapers.



Central New York Lawns, Landscapes & Gardens Facts

Bentgrass and Nimblewill: Weedy Grasses in Central New York

Q. Two spots in our lawn have been invaded by a very low-growing, weedy grass that has very small, blue-green leaves. When I rake these spots, which are between five and ten feet in diameter, the grass pulls up almost like a toupee! What is this stuff and how can I get rid of it?

A. From your description, it sounds like your lawn's infested by bentgrass and/or nimblewill? Similar to invasions by other weeds, these weedy grasses most likely got established in parts of your lawn that weren't growing vigorously?

A mat-forming growth habit and very short leaves having distinct ridges running the length of their upper surfaces is helpful in identifying creeping bentgrass. A similar mat-forming habit and slightly larger leaves without distinct ridges is characteristic of nimblewill.



The leaf blades of bentgrass are flat, less than one-eighth of an inch wide and bluish-green in color. And, with a magnifying glass you can see that the upper leaf surface has very distinct ridges.



Bentgrass and nimblewill have very small leaf blades and string-like stolons that are easy to rake up in large patches, sort of like a toupee.

What makes these grasses such successful invaders is their ability to form roots along stolons (horizontal stems) that grow over the soil surface. Wherever the desirable grasses are less dense, roots emerging from the stolons of bentgrass and/or nimblewill can penetrate the soil, become established and advance the infestation.

The only way to get rid of these grassy weeds is to kill them with a herbicide containing glyphosate as the active ingredient (e.g., Roundup, Kleenup, etc.). To increase the likelihood that you'll kill the entire infestation, make sure to apply the herbicide about five feet beyond the most heavily infested areas in order to kill any stolons that may be creeping out among the desirable grasses in your lawn.

Unfortunately, because these herbicides are non-selective, they'll also kill the desirable Kentucky bluegrass, fine fescue and perennial ryegrasses in your lawn. Therefore, you may end up with some pretty big dead spots in your lawn?

Once the bentgrass and/or nimblewill is dead, rake the spots thoroughly to expose as much bare soil as possible, sow new grass

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seed, rake lightly to mix the seed into the top quarter inch or so of soil, then start watering. Assuming the seed mix contains mostly Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescue, you'll probably mow the overseeded area for the first time four to six weeks after sowing the seed.

The best - and *only* time of year I recommend renovating bentgrass and nimblewill infested lawns is between roughly the first of August and middle of September.

The infested areas should be sprayed with Roundup, Kleenup, etc. during the first week or so in August (make sure to water the area thoroughly during the end of July to encourage these weedy grasses to be growing vigorously prior to being sprayed). By the middle of August it will be apparent if there were any spots that you missed. These spots should be sprayed again and then two weeks later - right about Labor Day - they should be overseeded.

Finally, simply renovating these infestations is not the end of the story. You should also spend some time figuring out why your lawn wasn't vigorous enough to out compete these invading grasses in the first place. Bentgrass, for example, can out compete Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescues in lawns that are mowed too short (less than three inches), receive too much fertilizer and are watered too frequently. In other words, bentgrass often becomes a problem in lawns that are treated like a golf course putting green. In fact, that's exactly where they're most often grown intentionally!

By following my recommendations in the accompanying ***“Central New York Lawn Care”*** and ***“Recommended Lawn Care Product”*** guides, you'll create conditions that encourage desirable grasses in your lawn and discourage undesirable grasses and other weeds well into the future.



Bentgrass infestations tend to be somewhat circular patches ranging from three to five feet in diameter. They also tend to mat down more densely than surrounding grasses - then lift dramatically when raked.