

Yellow Nutsedge

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I first heard of yellow nutsedge when I was taking hotline calls in my first year of Master Gardeners. Every dry hot humid year since, this weed has cropped up again as a problem. The last three weeks have been perfect for its growth and detection in the lawn.

Yellow nutsedge, scientific name *Cyperus exculentus* L., looks like grass. Most of the year you can catch sight of it by its bright emerald green color. On a dry humid hot year you will see its ¼ inch wide blades standing high above the dormant turf grass. Though it looks like a grass, it becomes unsightly growing in a dense clump higher than the rest of the lawn and it creates an area of rougher walking.

A close look will reveal that the nutsedge is not a grass. The blades are thicker than grass and are growing in a triangular pattern around stems with three angles. Pulling up a plant will reveal more: the roots have noticeable white rhizomes. On a mature plant the roots will also have small tubers, or nutlets. If you cut the stem straight across, you will see a triangular shape with a hollow center. If the plant is not mowed, small dull yellow spikes will develop at the top, the flower and then seeds.

Nutsedge becomes a problem in the lawns of athletic fields and golf courses and homes where the owner wants a well manicured lawn. It is difficult to control.

“Turfgrass Science at Purdue University” give methods of control beginning with cultural practices. The first control is to create a dense aggressive turf. Turf that is mowed too low or over watered or underwatered will be less effective in blocking the growth of yellow nutsedge. Nutsedge thrives in areas of poor drainage where the soil is moist.

Purdue suggest that a small population can be hand pulled. The plant may come back from the underground tubers. Since the tuber can remain dormant underground for several years, pulling may not be very effective. Digging out the entire plant is more preferable.

There are no biological controls given, but there are chemical controls. Again because of the underground tubers, there may need to be several applications. It is also important to know the best time to apply the chemicals.

Both Purdue University and Pennsylvania State .

