

Lawn and Turfgrass Weeds: Common Chickweed

Common chickweed is a weed of home lawns, parks, golf courses, and athletic fields.



Figure 1. Common chickweed growing in a shaded lawn in central Pennsylvania. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

Common chickweed [*Stellaria media* (L.) Vill.] is found in both high and low maintenance turf, in sunny and shaded areas, and in many different soil types. This species tends to grow in a prostrate fashion, forming patches and is most noticeable when flowering during spring and summer.

Life cycle

Common chickweed is a member of the Caryophyllaceae family and is generally classified as a winter annual. Plants produce shallow, fibrous root systems and long, branching stems that grow prostrate along the soil surface and root at nodes. This species produces flowers, fruits, and seeds from spring to early fall. Seeds can germinate during spring, summer, and fall. Common chickweed produces one or two generations per year and can sometimes act as a short-lived perennial.

Identification

Common chickweed stems grow close to the ground then turn slightly upright, giving rise to leaves and flowers. Leaves are arranged opposite one another on stems and leaves on lower portions of the plant have short pubescent petioles, whereas those at the apex have no petioles. Individual leaves are ovate and pointed at the tip, approximately ½ to 1 inch in length, and with entire (non-serrated or smooth) margins.



Figure 2. Leaves of common chickweed showing the ovate shape and pointed tips, petioles, and opposite leaf arrangement. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

Small flowers (¼ inch or less in diameter) occur at tips of stems and each flower has five white petals. Individual petals are deeply divided; thus, flowers appear to have ten petals. Each flower is subtended by five light-green sepals. Flowers develop into capsules that contain multiple seeds. Viable seeds give rise to new plants.





Figure 3. Common chickweed flower with five divided white petals and five green sepals. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State



Figure 4. Common chickweed seed capsules forming on stem apex. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

Management and control

Infestations of common chickweed can be reduced by improving turf density through fertilization, regular mowing, and use of turfgrasses well-adapted to site conditions. This weed can be controlled with various postemergence herbicides, particularly those containing dicamba, MCPP, and/or fluroxypyr.

Some postemergence herbicide products labeled for control of common chickweed.

Active ingredients	Product name(s)*
2,4-D and 2,4-DP	Patron 170 (ester formulation)
2,4-D, 2,4-DP, and dicamba	Super Trimec (ester formulation)
2,4-D, clopyralid, and dicamba	Millennium Ultra 2**
2,4-D, fluroxypyr, and dicamba	Escalade 2 Herbicide
2,4-D, fluroxypyr, triclopyr, and flumioxazin	Sure Power (ester formulation)
2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba	Trimec Classic, Threesome, Lesco Three-Way, 3-D Herbicide, Primera Triplet SF
2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba, and carfentrazone-ethyl	Speedzone
2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba, and sulfentrazone	Surge
2,4-D, quinclorac, and dicamba	Quincept, 2DQ Herbicide, Triad QC Select, Triad SFZ Select
2,4-D, quinclorac, dicamba, and sulfentrazone	Q4 Plus
2,4-D and triclopyr	Chaser 2 Amine, Turflon II Amine
2,4-D and triclopyr	Chaser Turf Herbicide (ester formulation)
2,4-D, fluroxypyr, and triclopyr	Momentum FX2
2,4-D, fluroxypyr, triclopyr, and sulfentrazone	Momentum 4-Score
2,4-D, triclopyr, dicamba, and pyraflufen-ethyl	4-Speed XT (ester formulation)
2,4-D, triclopyr, dicamba, and sulfentrazone	Foundation
carfentrazone-ethyl and quinclorac	SquareOne
florasulam	Defendor
fluroxypyr	Vista XRT
fluroxypyr, dicamba, and fenoxaprop-p-ethyl	Last Call Selective Herbicide
MCPA, fluroxypyr, and dicamba	Change Up

MCPA, fluroxypyr, and triclopyr	Battleship III
MCPA, MCPP, and dicamba	Trimec Encore, Tri-Power Selective Herbicide
MCPA, MCPP, dicamba, and carfentrazone-ethyl	Powerzone (ester formulation)
MCPA, triclopyr, and dicamba	Lesco Three-Way Ester II, Cool Power (ester formulation)
MCPA, triclopyr, and dicamba	Eliminate, Horsepower
MCPP	Mecomec 4 Turf Herbicide
Mesotrione	Tenacity
triclopyr and clopyralid	2-D Herbicide**, Confront**
triclopyr and fluroxypyr	Tailspin

*Follow label precautionary statements, restrictions, and directions regarding tolerant turfgrass species, rates, and timing of applications. **Clopyralid-containing products should not be used on residential lawns but can be used for treating weeds in non-residential turf.

References

Muenscher, W.C. 1987. Weeds 2nd Ed. Cornell Univ. Press. 586 pp.

Uva, R.H., J.C. Neal, and J.M. DiThomaso. 1997. Weeds of the northeast. Cornell Univ. Press. 397 pp.

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