Lawn and Turfgrass Weeds: Annual or Daisy Fleabane

Annual fleabane, also called daisy fleabane, is a common and fast-growing broadleaf weed found in Pennsylvania lawns and other low maintenance turf areas. Its common name comes from folklore claiming dried plant material will repel fleas.

Flowers of annual fleabane. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

**Life cycle**

Annual fleabane (*Erigeron annuus* (L.) Pers.) is a member of the aster family (Asteraceae) and has a summer annual life cycle. Seed of this species germinates in spring, and newly emerging plants produce a rosette of leaves. Flower stems and flowers are produced in early to mid-May, produce seed, and plants die back during hot weather or at the end of the growing season.

Mature flowering annual fleabane plant growing in a lawn in central Pennsylvania (left), and newly emerged plant in early spring (right). Photos: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

**Identification**

Annual fleabane is first visible in early spring as a rosette of light green, succulent leaves. Leaves elongate rapidly and can grow up to 5 inches in length if not mowed frequently. Individual leaves are sessile, lance-shaped with a pointed tip and serrated margins. Leaves on upper portions of stems are smaller, narrow, and alternately arranged. Stems are branching and can grow up to 3.5 inches in height. Clusters of flowers can be observed in various stages of development on a single plant, beginning as rounded green buds, and eventually expanding to form composite flowers. Flowers are about $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, with a central disk of yellow florets and many (50-120) fringe-like white rays. When flower buds begin to form, stems often bend over, forming a “shepherd’s crook.”
Annual fleabane plant showing bending of flower stem into a shepherd’s crook (left), and an individual leaf from a rosette (right). Photos: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

Flowers of annual fleabane showing a central disk of yellow florets and a fringe of white rays. Photo: Peter Landschoot, Penn State

Management and control

Infestations of fleabane can be reduced by improving turf density through fertilization, regular mowing, and use of turfgrasses well-adapted to site conditions. This weed can be suppressed or controlled with various postemergence herbicides.

Daisy fleabane is easily controlled with commercial broadleaf herbicides containing 2,4-D, MCPA, and other compounds. Control is best achieved when plants are young and actively growing.

Some postemergence herbicide products labeled for control of annual fleabane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active ingredients</th>
<th>Product name(s)*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D and 2,4-DP</td>
<td>Patron 170 (ester formulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, clopyralid, and dicamba</td>
<td>Millennium Ultra 2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, dicamba, quinclorac</td>
<td>2-DQ Herbicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, fluroxypyr, and dicamba</td>
<td>Escalade 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, fluroxypyr, triclopyr, and flumioxazin</td>
<td>Sure Power (ester formulation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba, and carfentrazone-ethyl</td>
<td>Speedzone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, quinclorac, and dicamba</td>
<td>Quincept; Triad QC Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,4-D, fluroxypyr, and triclopyr</td>
<td>Momentum FX2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florasulam</td>
<td>Defendor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPA, fluroxypyr, and dicamba</td>
<td>Change Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPA, fluroxypyr, and triclopyr</td>
<td>Battleship III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPA, MCPP, dicamba, and carfentrazone-ethyl</td>
<td>Powerzone (ester formulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPA, triclopyr, and dicamba</td>
<td>Eliminate, Horsepower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyraflufen ethyl</td>
<td>Octane 2% SC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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


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