Lawn and Turfgrass Weeds: Thyme-leaf Speedwell

Thyme-leaf speedwell (also spelled thymeleaf speedwell or thyme-leaved speedwell) is a weed of home lawns, parks, and institutional grounds.

This species is often found growing in moist soils and shaded areas with thin turf. It tends to grow in diffuse patches and is most conspicuous when flowering during spring.

Life cycle

Thyme-leaf speedwell (Veronica serpyllifolia L.) is a member of the plantain family (Plantaginaceae) and is classified as a perennial. Plants produce stolons (runners) that creep in prostrate fashion and form new roots and leaves at nodes. This species produces flowers, fruits, and seeds during early to mid spring.

Identification

Thyme-leaf speedwell stems are hairless, and initially grow close to the ground then turn upright, giving rise to flowers and seed-bearing fruits. Flower stems do not branch and can grow up to 12 inches tall. Leaves are oval or oblong and grow opposite one another on stems. Lower leaves are larger (½ to 1 inch in length and about a ½ inch wide) than leaves growing on upper portions of stems. Leaf margins of thyme-leaf speedwell are smooth, and leaf surfaces lack hairs; whereas common field speedwell and corn speedwell have serrated leaf margins and leaves with hairs on the surface.
Flowers develop on stalks that arise from leaf axils on stems and are very small, usually 1/8 to 1/4 inch across. Each flower has four white petals (one petal is smaller than the others) with dark blue or purple longitudinal stripes. Like other speedwells, each flower has two stamens and a single style. Thyme-leaf speedwell flowers are replaced by heart-shaped fruits that contain seeds.

Management and control

The occurrence of thyme-leaf speedwell can be reduced by improving turf density through fertilization, regular mowing, and the use of turfgrasses well-adapted to site conditions. This weed can be suppressed or controlled with various preemergence and postemergence herbicides. The table below lists preemergence herbicide products labeled for control of thyme-leaf speedwell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active ingredients</th>
<th>Product name(s)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>isoxaben</td>
<td>Gallery 75 Dry Flowable, Isoxaben 75WG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prodiamine and quinclorac</td>
<td>Cavalcade PQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulfentrazone and prodiamine</td>
<td>Echelon 4SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oxydiazon</td>
<td>Oxadiazon 2G, Oxadiazon SC, Ronstar FLO, Ronstar G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Follow label precautionary statements, restrictions, and directions regarding tolerant turfgrass species, rates, and timing of applications. Active ingredients and products in bold type contain a specific reference to thyme-leaf speedwell on the label. Other labels list speedwell but do not specify the individual species.
Table 2. Postemergence herbicide products labeled for control of thyme-leaf speedwell.

*Follow label precautionary statements, restrictions, and directions regarding tolerant turfgrass species, rates, and timing of applications. Active ingredients and products in bold type contain a specific reference to thyme-leaf speedwell on the label. Other labels list speedwell but do not specify the individual species.

**Clopyralid-containing products should not be used on residential lawns but can be used for treating weeds in non-residential turf.

References
Anonymous. Thymeleaf speedwell (Veronica serpyllifolia). The University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management Program.


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