

Virginia Buttonweed and Other Summer Weeds

In late spring to early summer, Virginia buttonweed starts forming mats that can eventually smother out the lawn. Pull up small populations of Virginia buttonweed or carefully treat them with herbicides like metsulfuron (MSM Turf and other trade names) or Celsius. These herbicides work well with repeated applications spaced four to six weeks apart. Metsulfuron and Celsius can be safely applied on St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass, bermudagrass and zoysia during warm weather. Carpetgrass will be damaged by Celsius herbicide. Bahiagrass will not tolerate metsulfuron or Celsius.

Common lespedeza is a mat-forming annual legume that emerges in the spring and lingers deep into fall throughout Louisiana. By late summer, the plant matures and becomes woody and tough on lawn mower blades. Metsulfuron works well on this weed but early summer applications are more effective.

Torpedograss is a perennial grass that's mainly a problem in south Louisiana, but I do get calls from north Louisiana as well. There are few lawn problems more devastating than a torpedograss infestation. Torpedograss is extremely tolerant of herbicides and easily outcompetes centipedegrass and other slow-growing grasses.

The weed often starts from soil brought in during flower bed construction. However, it quickly spreads from the flower bed to the lawn. The ability to suppress torpedograss in lawns depends on the turfgrass species. Selectively removing torpedograss out of lawn grasses and sports fields is rarely completely achievable. Quinclorac (Drive and other trade names) is a herbicide that is somewhat effective in suppressing torpedograss in bermudagrass and zoysia. Unfortunately, you cannot use quinclorac in centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass.

Sethoxydim (Bonide Grass Beater and other trade names) will temporarily injure torpedograss infesting centipedegrass, but it does not provide long-term control. The torpedograss recovers and the weed infests the centipedegrass again. Unfortunately, there are no selective herbicide options for torpedograss infesting St. Augustinegrass. Often, complete renovation is necessary when centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass are severely infested.

If you decide to renovate and install a new lawn, consider sodding the lawn with zoysia (semishady or full-sun lawns) or bermudagrass (for full sun only). Converting to zoysia or bermudagrass will allow the use of quinclorac, the most effective selective herbicide on torpedograss. Installing zoysia may be the better fit for Louisiana because of its good shade and drought tolerance. Zoysia is not a high-maintenance grass when managed properly. Maintain zoysia at 1 to 1.5 inches with a sharp mower blade and fertilize twice per year. There are several sod farmers in Louisiana that grow zoysia, so it is readily available.

Proper lawn maintenance keeps your lawn healthy and reduces the need for the use of pesticides. If it becomes necessary to use a pesticide in the lawn, it is highly important to always read and follow their labels before using. The label will tell you how to use the product safely to achieve satisfactory results. You will find the label attached to the product's container.

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Virginia buttonweed begins flowering in mid-summer.



Common lespedeza.