

WEED CONTROL IN HOME FRUIT PLANTINGS

Many home gardeners have fruit plantings that are too large to hand weed and too small to use heavy equipment in. Hand pulling and mulching can be used to control weeds in many cases. In addition, herbicides can be used to supplement the above cultural practices to make controlling weeds easier and faster. For small areas, several chemical manufacturers (e.g., Ortho, Scott, Southern States, Security, and others) sell a variety of herbicides in small quantities which are ideal for this job. These chemicals are formulated to make them more convenient and easier for the homeowner to use. For larger areas, several products can be purchased over the counter at farm chemical retail stores. For all-purpose weed knock-down, use glyphosate. These knockdown materials (postemergence) will kill many emerged weeds already growing. Remember to keep these materials off the crop plants to avoid damage.

To control germinating seedlings, several preemergence herbicides are available. General use recommendations are given below, but consult the label on each product for specific directions before application.

Strawberries

Weed control is difficult since newly set strawberries are sensitive to many of the herbicides. Dacthal is the only herbicide which can be applied to clean soil after planting strawberries. Use 4 ounces by weight of Dacthal 75% wettable powder in one gallon of water to spray 1,000 square feet. Up to three applications can be made per year with at least one month intervals. Dacthal will be effective for 4 to 8 weeks. Devrinol can also be used on established plants. See the label for directions. Apply one-half inch of irrigation immediately after application of Devrinol for best results. Poast can be used for control of emerged annual and perennial grasses at any time except during harvest and during the period up to 30 days before harvest begins.

Small Fruits

(raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, grapes) and Orchard Fruit (apples, pears, peaches, plums, nuts)

A weed-free strip around the base of each plant is desirable. Mowing a grass or natural weed strip between crop plants and applying a preemergence herbicide and/or a 3-inch mulch under the crop plants is the ideal method of managing weeds in your home fruit planting. Following are general suggestions for using weed control chemicals in fruit plantings. Read the information on the container for more detailed directions.

Preemergence Herbicides

These materials are used to prevent weed germination. They must be applied as a directed spray to the base of the crop plant. Contact of the spray with the lower stems or leaves of these plants, however, will not damage them. Mixing these herbicides into the soil surface is often suggested to increase effectiveness. Watering with an inch or more of water can often be used as a substitute for incorporation around established plants.

- Casoron (dichlobenil) is available as a 2 or 4% granule. It can be used on most woody plants 30 days after transplanting. This material is excellent for control of cool-season grasses and weeds. It is best applied during the winter months.
- Devrinol 50% dry flowable granules can be used on many newly planted and established fruit crops. Put 1 ounce by weight in one gallon of water (or more) and spray uniformly over 1,000 square feet. It is best applied either in early spring or after harvest to weed-free soil.
- Princep (simazine) is available as a wettable (90 WP) powder and a liquid (4L) and can be used on many established woody plants. Do not apply to plants less than 3 years old. It is best applied either in early spring or after harvest to weed-free soil.
- Surflan is available as a liquid (4AS). Apply 2 to 4 quarts of the 4AS evenly over one acre in at least 20 gallons water or put 1½ to 3 tablespoons of 4AS in one gallon water and spray evenly over 1,000 square feet. Surflan can be applied safely after transplanting on many woody stemmed crops. It is best applied either in early spring or after harvest to weed-free soil.

Postemergence Herbicides

These materials are used to eliminate existing weeds. Remember to keep these materials off crop plants or damage will result.

- Roundup or Ortho Kleenup – This material is most effective on small annuals and perennials in the middle of the summer. Roundup is a slow-acting material which will completely kill the plants, including the roots of perennials. It will take 10 to 14 days for the plants to die. Since the concentration of active ingredient in these products varies, follow the mixing directions on the container. Do not use these materials during bloom or harvest periods.