



Use Your Water Right, 137 Bluebird Lane Clearwater, MN 55320
www.useyourwaterright.com info@useyourwaterright.com 320-281-4785

Understanding the Life Cycle is half the battle



As a child growing up we had fun blowing the puff ball seeds of dandelions across the yard and watching the seeds float away to some mysterious land far far away. Today we look outside and wonder why our neighbor across the street won't do anything about those dandelions. Don't they understand that no matter what we do for our dandelions theirs will still spread to our lawn. Don't worry, because the dandelions on your lawn probably originated from seed that drifted in several miles away. It is settled then we will be fighting dandelions for the rest of eternity. Developing a plan to manage these plants in a state that has four seasons can be a challenge. Knowing the life cycle of this plant will help in how we manage it.

You have heard me mention in other publications that a dandelion is a biannual plant. This means that the plant grows in a two year cycle. The truth is that dandelions in the right environment such as the southern states can actually continually thrive as a perennial plant as long as the conditions are right. In Minnesota we actually have 4 seasons and this changes the life cycle of the Dandelion. Dandelion begins from seed which is cast off by other adult dandelions and finds its way to a bare area in a lawn or a landscape. Once the temperature of the soil reaches 50 degrees the dandelion seed can begin germination with good moist conditions and

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plenty of sun. Germination is much more rapid when soil temps reach 60 to 70 degrees. This would bring our time line into June and July. The plant will begin to grow, and in about 12-18 weeks will become a full grown plant. In southern climates the plant would normally go into a flowering stage and continue its life cycle. In Minnesota after 12- 18 weeks, we are actually into full fall, when the night-time temps begin to dip into the low 40s and 30s. Dandelion growth for the most part will slow down and go into dormancy by late October. If we have a warm fall some dandelions on south facing slopes or south facing side of house can flower in the fall. Most will stay in dormancy. When next spring arrives the dandelions will finish off their adult stage and produce flowers when the soil temps reach 50 degrees which is usually around May 15th or later. Seed heads will then produce and start the cycle all over. Because of the harsh conditions in Minnesota, the energy used to create the new seed can often kill the plant ending its lifecycle. This is the reason that I will sometimes refer to them as Bi-annual plants. Now that you understand the life cycle, the best time to actually treat the plant with an herbicide and have the most effective kill rate would be in the fall when the plants are young and active, which would eliminate the need to treat in the spring. Most people treat in the spring time, but are very ineffective with treatment because the plants are in the adult stage, which requires a higher amount of chemical, in order to treat the plant. So next time when you grab that spray bottle of 2-4-D, think about the time of year that you are applying it and if it is going to be effective.

Technical Talk

New water saving products are constantly entering the market place. Each month we will use this portion of the newsletter called "Technical Talk" to highlight new products. Hopefully the information will help you to make informed decisions when you make changes to your irrigation system.

MP ROTATORS



This is a new sprinkler which was introduced by Hunter Irrigation Industry in the spring of 2008. The intention of this head was to create an irrigation device that would apply equal distribution of water throughout its distribution area without relying on other irrigation heads to make up the difference. These heads provide a very low output of water covering areas from 10 feet up to 30 feet of distance. Because of the slow output, it allows the soil to take up the water, eliminating runoff and waste. Since their introduction landscape managers and home owners alike have been experiencing lower needs for water up to 30% less since there is no run off. These heads are compatible with most irrigation systems and make retrofitting very easy. For a demonstration of how these heads work, and to watch them in action, call 320-310-4241. For more information on this product, click on this link www.mprotator.com.

Put your lawn on a diet.
As you start up your irrigation system, think about all that money you could be saving if you get a professional audit done by Use Your Water Right. For more info go to www.useyourwaterright.com or call 320-310-4241 or email us at info@useyourwaterright.com.



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Happy Writing
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