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Tropical Soda Apple Control (Preliminary Results)

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Tropical soda apple (TSA) is a perennial broadleaf weed that has covered nearly one-half million acres (20 percent of all bahiagrass in Florida) within the last six years. If allowed to go uncontrolled, this figure could double within two years.

Tropical soda apple ranges from three to six feet tall and can produce fruit throughout the year. However, a major concentration of the fruit is produced between September and May. Mature fruit are solid yellow and each can contain about 400 to 450 seeds, with each plant averaging about 100 fruit, resulting in about 40,000 to 50,000 seeds/plant/year. The greatest number of seedlings tend to develop from September to April, with little to no seed germination between April and September.

Control Recommendations

Mowing: Research studies indicate one mowing of TSA to a three inch stubble will weaken the plants and provide about 20 percent control. A second mowing 50 to 60 days after the first mowing will result in about 60 percent TSA control with no herbicide. However, mowing alone will not provide 100 percent TSA control but will weaken plants and increase herbicide activity.

Remember, mowing must be to a three inch stubble. Mowing to a stubble of six to eight inches provides little benefit in controlling TSA and may not enhance herbicide activity.

Herbicides: The broadcast application of 0.5 lb/A Remedy or 0.5 + 0.5 lb/A Reedy at 30 day intervals plus 0.25 percent non-ionic surfactant to non-mowed plants (three to five feet tall)

resulted in 60 and 80 percent control, respectively. Increasing the rate of Remedy to 1.0 or 1.0 + 1.0 lb/A plus 0.25 percent non-ionic surfactant resulted in 70 and 80 percent control, respectively.

Herbicide and Mowing:

Mow TSA plants to a three inch stubble, allowing 50 to 60 days for regrowth (plants in bud to first flower), and broadcast spraying with 0.5 or 1.0 lb/A Remedy plus 0.25 percent non-ionic surfactant resulted in about 92 percent control. Remedy applied 0.5 + 0.5 lb/A or 1.0 + 1.0 lb/A plus surfactant resulted in 96 percent control.

Growers are advised to mow all TSA plants to three inches in early April, allow 50 to 60 days for regrowth followed by 0.5 lb/A Remedy plus surfactant, 30 days later apply an additional 0.5 lb/A Remedy plus surfactant. This should provide about 95+ percent control. Be sure to use a spot treatment to control the remaining 5 percent about 60 days after the second spray application.

Spot Treatment:

Spray individual TSA plants in rough areas, hammocks, ditches and etc. using a 1.0 to 1.5 percent Remedy solution plus surfactant. This treatment is generally used where plants are not accessible to mowing equipment. To avoid spot spraying the same plants twice or not spraying a plant at all, add a colored dye to the herbicide solution, prior to spraying.

Remember; do not allow plants to produce fruit! Fruit is consumed by cattle and spread to new pastures.