

# CHRIS' CORNER

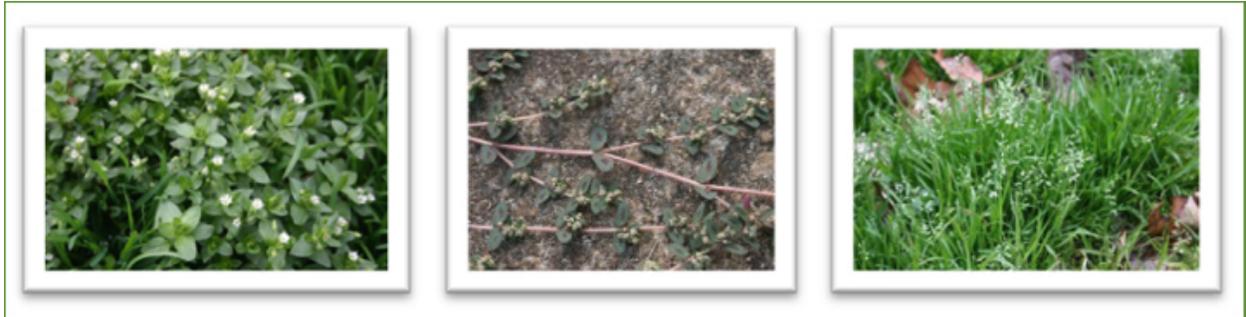


Photo Credit: Walter Reeves

## ARE THEY NATURE'S WILDFLOWERS or WEEDS?

Spring has sprung here in the Mid-South! April is a busy and beautiful month in the garden with those amazing spring colors. Thanks to March rains, plants are supplied with sufficient moisture, which has led to growth. Unfortunately, not only are desirable plants thriving, so are the weeds!

Weeds are forever present in the landscape, popping up in flowerbeds, lawns, vegetable gardens or even in cracks in the driveway. Weeds can make the overall appearance of your landscape aesthetically unappealing. They compete for the same things desirable plants need to thrive: water, nutrients, sunlight, space, and air.

Weeds can enter the garden in a variety of ways. Water, wind, animals or lawn equipment can spread weed seeds. Purchased plants, manure, and soil may also introduce them.

A good rule of thumb in developing a control strategy is to prevent weeds from propagating. Preventing seed formation will reduce the number of weeds from one year to the next. Many perennial weeds survive because they produce bulbs, rhizomes (underground stems), or stolon (horizontal stems). These survival techniques make controlling perennial weeds very difficult.

Before you pull out the chemicals to control those weeds, there are a few ways to deal with them naturally. Spacing your desirable plants closer together creates a dense canopy that shades the soil from sunlight so weeds will be less likely to germinate. Applying organic mulch in the garden prevents weeds from sprouting; two to three inches of mulch should be sufficient.

Landscape fabrics are more desirable than plastic because they allow air, water, and nutrients to pass through. This method should help keep perennial weeds under control. Consider using a product that contains Corn Gluten Meal in your flowerbeds or vegetable garden. This natural product prevents the formation of roots. Read and follow the label before applying.

If possible, pulling weeds by hand is a great option especially if the soil is moist. A trowel, spade, or cultivator can help you get under weed roots. My grandmother's weapon of choice against weeds was a garden hoe. There are other options such as herbicidal soaps or alternative herbicides like vinegar, clover oil or citric acid. Again, read the label before using. If you are considering using synthetic herbicides as a means to control weeds, give me a call (901-752-1207) and I will discuss those options with you.

Speaking of weeding, I better get with it or those weeds in my garden will be back next year with a vengeance. Until next time, happy weeding!



*Christopher Cooper*

