

ASK TOM

Lawn Care 2: Dandelions' Revenge

By Tom Mrakas

Due likely to last week's column, I received a follow up email (or two!) with more lawn care questions.

The most common question I received? Tips to get rid of those pesky dandelions that emerge out of nowhere and take over your lawn in a matter of days!

As I said last week, I am not an expert in lawn care, so it really isn't my strong suit. But I do want to answer my readers' questions so I did a bit of research myself, getting advice from my go-to landscaper.

As most probably know, there is a ban on pesticide use in Aurora in residential settings. (Personally, I think that banning the wanton use of pesticides was a good decision. Does it make the removal of weeds more difficult? Yes, it does, but just because something is easier doesn't make it better!)

With the pesticide ban in place for a few years now, weeds ? and dandelions in particular ? have become a bit of a problem. I hate to say it, folks, but there really isn't an easy or labour-free way to remove them, in my experience.

The first thing you can do is attack them in much the same way that our grandparents did, and that is to pull each one out.

I know what you are thinking ? holy smokes, that's a lot of work. But, it really is the only sure-fire way that I know of to begin to get rid of them. Notice how I say ?begin?, because pulling them out is not too effective if you don't get the whole root out.

If you don't, it will just grow back ? and will bring a few friends too.

There are quite a few tools out there on the market that allow you to stand (as opposed to hunched over, or on your knees all day) while removing them but ? I am not going to sugar coat it. It is still a lot of work.

Another trick you can try to keep the weed growth at bay is spraying the weeds with vinegar. This is an old fashioned and fairly effective tool to keep weed growth under control. However, it is a bit problematic as you have to be careful as vinegar will also kill the grass.

For dandelions on hard surfaces like cracks in concrete or asphalt, you can also use a torch or pour boiling water on them (but this is also a bit dangerous to do too).

I would stick to pulling them out by hand and then following up with vinegar to kill the remnants.

One of the best defenses against dandelions is to keep your lawn healthy.

Throw some more grass seed in any sparse areas. Avoid cutting your lawn too short. Aim for a height of about 2-3 inches. This will help to block out the sun and prevent some weed seeds from germinating. Finally, use a mulching mower rather than a bag mower and leave the grass clippings on your lawn to act as mulch.

These simple tips should help you to reduce or eliminate dandelions from your lawn in a gentler, natural way than using toxic chemicals or weed killers.

It may not be as fast, but it will definitely be the better way.

Until next week, remember a good job, is a job well done! If you have any questions you can reach me at

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