



# Ada County

# Pest of the Month



July 2012

**A quick guide to identifying and controlling  
invasive plants and animals found in the county**

## JOHNSONGRASS

Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*) is a troublesome perennial grass weed that reduces yields in corn, grain sorghum, soybean, cotton and leguminous forages. Originally introduced into the United States as a forage crop, it is now an agricultural pest in most states south of the 42nd parallel. Johnsongrass is a perennial weed that may reach heights of up to 6 1/2 feet. Johnsongrass is capable of rapidly colonizing a variety of different environments due to the large amounts of seed and rhizomes this plant produces. It is now one of the most common and troublesome weeds of most agronomic and horticultural crops, as well as roadsides, pastures, and hay fields.



### Quick Facts



Its ability to produce seed and rhizomes and spread to uninfested areas contributes to making Johnsongrass a menacing weed. Rhizomes are extensive and are produced in the top 10 inches of soil but have been found at depths of 5 feet. Johnsongrass readily reproduces from rhizomes and seed; seedling plants can initiate rhizomes as few as 19 days following emergence.

A single plant may produce more than 80,000 seeds in a single growing season, and 275 feet of rhizomes. Seeds shatter easily and fall to the ground beneath plants that produce them. Instead of germinating uniformly, seeds can remain dormant and produce plants over several years. Johnsongrass seed can remain viable in the soil for more than 10 years. Agricultural seed, hay and various livestock feeds sometimes become contaminated with Johnsongrass seed.

Johnsongrass generally grows in fertile bottomlands along creek and river banks and in upland fields. Irrigation ditch banks are also overgrown with Johnsongrass, and seed is carried by the water. In a new location, Johnsongrass spreads rapidly and soon becomes a serious problem. Tillage equipment can spread the rhizomes, and birds spread the seed.

*See control methods on other side...*

## How to Control

### Johnsongrass control programs should:

- Prevent spread of rhizomes from infested to uninfested areas.
- Kill or weaken established plants and their underground rhizome system.
- Control seedlings originating from shattered seed.
- Prevent production of seed and its spread to new areas.
- Use fall tillage to bring rhizomes to soil surface, where they may be killed by winter conditions.



**Cultural Control:** Cultivation may begin any time during the growing season and should be done in such a manner as to cut off the entire plant at each operation. Cultivation should be continued until the plants have been eradicated or have been suppressed to such extent that remaining plants may be more economically destroyed by the application of approved chemicals to individual plants or by hand cultivation.

In yards, flower gardens, lawns and among trees and shrubbery, intensive cultivation like hoeing and digging are effective methods of thoroughly cutting the Johnsongrass at regular intervals.

A combination of small grains and intensive cultivation may be used. Close grazing or mowing at 2 or 3 week intervals through the growing season and followed by late fall plowing, to expose the root stalks through the winter, is an accepted control practice.

**Herbicides:** The following herbicides may be used.

- **Bromacil (Hyvar).** DO NOT APPLY TO CROPLAND. Use for industrial sites and non-crop areas. Apply before or during active plant growth. Follow label directions and precautions.
- **MSMA.** DO NOT APPLY TO CROPLAND. Spray to wet foliage completely and apply during active plant growth. Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Glyphosate (Roundup).** For best results apply to actively growing plants when most have reached boot to head stages of growth. DO NOT apply after the plants turn brown in the fall. Allow 7 or more days between application and tillage. Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Sulfometuron (Oust + nonionic surfactant).** DO NOT APPLY TO CROPLAND. Apply pre-emergence or early post emergence to boot stage. Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Trifluralin (Treflan).** Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Fluazifop-P-butyl (Fusilade).** Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Sethoxydim (Poast, Poast Plus).** Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Fusion.** Follow label directions and precautions.
- **Arsenal.** Follow label directions and precautions.

**Note:** Chemical control of any weed can be difficult and confusing. If you are not experienced in chemical control or do not understand the product label, you should consult a licensed applicator to assist you. Inappropriate application can kill desirable vegetation, and may violate federal law.



For questions and concerns, please contact:

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