

Creeping Woodsorrel

By Curtis Swift, Ph.D., Colorado State University Extension, Tri River Area

Curtis.Swift@colostate.edu

Creeping Woodsorrel (*Oxalis corniculata*) is a problem in a number of lawns in Grand Junction and other areas of Colorado. This is a difficult weed to control.

Creeping Woodsorrel is a perennial broadleaf plant with leaves resembling clover. They are fully subdivided, each consisting of three heart-shaped leaflets and alternate along the stem. The cotyledons (seed leaves) are oval to egg-shaped and hairless, except for minute hairs along the margins. Attractive yellow flowers, borne singly or in small groups, are very characteristic. The mature plant has creeping stems emerging from a slender taproot. The stems root at the joints and invade larger areas. When seeds mature, pods open explosively, often spreading seeds 10 feet (300 cm) or more.¹



Chemical Control:

Herbicides recommended for control of *Oxalis corniculata* include 2,4-D combination herbicides, Triclopyr and clopyralid.²

Some 2,4-D combination herbicides contain MCPP (Mecoprop). You can also purchase MCPP as a stand-alone herbicide. MCPP acts relatively slowly requiring three to four weeks for control.³ The Riverdale label states “avoid spray contact or drift to susceptible plants such as ... ornamentals ... and other plants. ... even very small quantities of the spray ... can cause severe injury during both growing and dormant season.”⁴ MCPP is not absorbed by roots and thus should be safe to use around trees, shrubs and other plants as long as spray drift does not occur.⁵

¹ http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/WEEDS/creeping_woodsorrel.html

² <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/4DMG/Weed/oxalis.htm>

³ <http://extoxnet.orst.edu/pips/mecoprop.htm>

⁴ <http://www.cdms.net/LDat/ld1L1001.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/notes/mecoprop.htm>

Pre-emergent herbicides (pendimethalin, dithiopyr, isoxaben, prodiamine) are recommended for use with MCPP to prevent *Oxalis c.* seed germination.

Precautions when using other herbicides:

2,4-D combination herbicides containing dicamba (Banvel) can kill trees, shrubs and flowers. Dicamba acts systemically in plants (throughout the entire plant) after it is absorbed through leaves and roots. It is easily transported throughout the plant, and also accumulates in new leaves.⁶ It is important that dicamba **NOT** be applied within the dripline of trees or shrubs. Dicamba can be root absorbed by these plants and accumulates in the soil with frequent or extensive use. This may result in damage to trees, shrubs, or other ornamentals.⁷

Triclopyr, sold under the brand names Access, Crossbow, ET, Garlon, Grazon, PathFinder, Redeem, Rely, Remedy, and Turflon, is a non-selective broadleaf herbicide safe on turf and around conifers.⁸ It is used to kill broadleaf trees and other woody plants. Triclopyr does not stay put and can move off the treated area.

Clopyralid, sold under the brand names Transline, Stinger, and Confront, kills broad-leaved weeds such as dandelions, clover, and thistle. Clopyralid contamination of yard debris compost emerged as a problem in Washington State in 2000 and 2001.⁹ The label recommends this chemical not be used in areas with wood plants.¹⁰

⁶ <http://www.pesticide.org/dicamba.pdf>

⁷ <http://ohioline.osu.edu/agf-fact/0402.html>

⁸ <http://extoxnet.orst.edu/pips/triclopy.htm>

⁹ <http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/soilmgmt/Clopyralid.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.cdms.net/LDat/ld0AR005.pdf>