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Headline: Troublesome Pasture Plant of the Week – Woody Sprouts



Hermitage, MO – Woody sprouts, such as Honey Locust, Hedge, and Persimmon, are the most difficult to control. Their root systems are very strong and hardy. Often found in abandon fields, poorly managed pastures, hay meadows, and newly opened timber ground these plants can greatly reduce the grazing potential and hay quality on our farms. When targeting these along with Oaks, Hickories, Cedars, and all other woody plants, we need to think about what our outcome needs to be.

Honey Locust, as well as Hedge sprouts, often have thorns which may cause other problems, like flat tires, as they remain standing in the field when killed. These plants are easily seen and grow very rapidly if not controlled early on. Honey Locust seed pods, which occur in late fall, are often consumed by cattle depositing seeds all over the farm. If you have one tree with pods, it will not take long before you begin to see them everywhere. Likewise, the Hedge trees produce a large green ball-like fruit and Persimmons produce an orangish plum-like fruit full of seeds, which are easily spread by squirrel, birds, raccoons, as well as other animals on the farm.

Mechanical control methods such as timely mowing and/or flash burning may reduce some of the easier controlled woody sprouts (Cedars), but are not likely to eliminate the troublesome plants as their root systems are very large and deep in the soil. When herbicide applications are being made, the key to success is timing of the application. If you choose to spray the entire field most sprouts are best controlled in late spring when the leaves are fully developed. Late applications (Fall) reduce the effectiveness of the broadcasted herbicide and you may not be satisfied with the control. Fall applications of herbicide should be done as a spot spray as long as the leaves are present and green. Applying the proper rates of Remedy (triclopyr) plus Grazon P & D at higher rates, Tordon 22k (picloram) plus Remedy, or Remedy plus Grazon Next have been found to be the most effective methods. Adding these chemicals when spot spraying, to an oil-based product (surfactant) will usually help with the kill. These oil-based products can be found wherever they sell the herbicides. This is not to say mixing with water does not work as well. Both methods are acceptable.

To kill trees with trunk sizes 1 to 3 plus inches, it is best to stump cut them and treat the stumps with a combination of the chemicals listed above. If the trees are large enough, 6 to 8 inches in diameter, you may want to leave them standing. These can be killed by double ringing the tree with a chain saw about 1 to 2 feet above the ground, cutting into the trunk about 1 inch all the way around, and applying chemical. It is also effective to plunge cut into larger tree trunks, below the double ring, and filling the cavity you created with chemical as well. I have seen large Locust trees stand for up to ten years after they are killed keeping the thorns up off the ground.

As always, when using any type of agricultural chemical, read and follow the manufacturer's label, and use the correct application methods.

For more information on pasture plant identification, please contact your local MU Extension Agronomy Field Specialist.