



Yellow Nutsedge in Turfgrass



Figure 1. Yellow nutsedge. (Note the shiny appearance of the leaves) (HGIC, University of Maryland)



Figure 2. Sprouting tubers at the end of rhizomes. (Note the shiny leaves originating in a group of three on the plant on the left) (HGIC, University of Maryland)

Introduction and description: Yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) is also referred to as yellow nut-grass. It is not a true grass but rather a sedge in the family Cyperaceae. It can be recognized by its erect 3-angled shiny yellow-green grass-like leaves (**Figure 1.**), which originate in groups of 3 at a common point at the base of the plant. If you dig up an established plant you will find 1-2 cm. long tubers (nuts) at the end of rhizomes located under the soil (**Figure 2.**). The flower is similar to those of grasses. The yellowish or brownish spikelets are present from July to September.

Life cycle: Nutsedge reproduces primarily by means of its underground tubers. The overwintering tubers sprout and seedlings emerge from May until mid-July. Rhizomes can also spread the weed. The tubers have the ability to remain dormant for 10+ years in the soil. This weed can easily be spread via its tubers by cultivation, in topsoil brought on to a property, and with nursery stock. Beginning in late June tubers are produced at the end of rhizomes. This continues into autumn. Single plants are capable of producing hundreds and possibly thousands of tubers during a season. Foliage will die in autumn with the first killing frost. The plant spends the winter as a tuber in the soil.

Habitat: Yellow nutsedge can be a problem in agricultural, horticultural and nursery crops and in turfgrass and landscape sites as well. In nature it is common on well-drained, sandy soils or damp to wet sites. Infestations will often originate from a wet site.

Management: For very small areas you may be able to carefully dig up individual plants including the tubers. If the tubers remain in the soil using this method will not be successful. Be

careful not to introduce this weed via topsoil or nursery stock. Single clumps of weeds can be spot treated with **glyphosate (Roundup), which is nonselective.** Ready-to-use containers are available for such areas.

For larger turfgrass areas: **bentazon** (*Basagran T/O*), **halosulfuron** (*Sedgehammer*), or **methanearsonates** (*MSMA*). Read and follow all label directions.

Information obtained from *Weeds of the Northeast*, by R. H. Uva, J.C. Neal, and J.M. Ditomaso, 1997.

Pesticide and management recommendations obtained from: *Part I Guide to Pest Management Around the Home, Cultural Methods* and *Part II -- Pest Management Around the Home, 2009-2010 Pesticide Guidelines*, Miscellaneous Bulletins 139S74-I and 139S74II, and *2011 PMG for Commercial Turfgrass*, Cornell Cooperative Extension Publications. Contact our office for information on ordering copies.

The Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), maintains a web site with a searchable database for pesticide products currently registered in New York State. Individuals who have Internet access can locate currently registered products containing the active ingredients suggested above at <http://pims.psur.cornell.edu/> (NYS PIMS).

This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional NYSDEC office. Read the label before applying any pesticide.

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