

Fall Work Can Save Time in the Spring

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Remember that beautiful crop of cheat grass that grew around the edges of your property last spring and summer? Well guess what: all that seed went to the ground and has started to grow already.

Downy Brome is called cheat grass because of the way it cheats other plants out of sunlight and water. It does this by being a winter annual. Winter annuals germinate in the fall so they are ready to start growing first thing in the spring before the rest of the landscape is ready to go. This way they are fully established while those other plants are still trying to get started.

This fall has provided a wonderful start for plants like cheat grass. The cheat grass growing along the alley behind my house is around two inches tall and growing in thick stands in a few places already. A little weeding now will save time and money come spring. Weeding out the cheat grass now means it won't be around to compete for water and sunlight in the spring, which will give other plants more of a chance to grow. It is also much easier to kill right now than any other time in its life cycle. Getting rid of the plant now means NO new WEED SEEDS next summer to deal with.

Winter annuals like cheat grass can easily be hoed out while it is small. However, for those of you wanting to use chemical treatment, fall is a great time to kill tough perennial weeds as well as winter annual weeds. As perennials prepare for winter they are storing starches in the roots for use later. Because of this natural process, chemicals like herbicides are taken into the root system more effectively in the fall and when the plant tires to grow in the spring it will be unable to.