

FACING SOME OF OUR DIFFICULT WEED PROBLEMS

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Weeds are undesirable plants that compete with gladiolus for light, water and nutrients. They also are a convenient reservoir of diseases and insects that can attack gladiolus plants. Digging gladiolus corms from rows full of weeds is not an enjoyable chore.

How do we prevent the weeds from overwhelming us? Weeds become a problem because they can spread and grow vigorously under the conditions prevailing in a particular area. Gladioli grow upright and do not canopy the area to shade the soil. This permits the sunlight to reach the soil and enables weeds to grow.

All understanding of why a few weeds are such a nuisance and what can be done to avoid them or control them will help us to deal with the problem.

Crabgrass and other annual weeds complete their life cycle in one growing season. Crabgrass seeds germinate when the soil temperature is sixty degrees. They grow, flower, form seed, and then die later in the same season when they are frosted. Purslane, ragweed, lambsquarters, redroot, pigweed, groundsel, galinsoga and many others have similar life cycles. Raking the soil surface after planting can partly control these annual weeds. Frequent hoeing or cultivation will disturb the weed seedlings or cut them off, preventing their growth. Deep cultivation, however, will injure gladiolus roots, so the weeds in the rows must be removed by hand. Soil hilled up against the base of the gladiolus plants to help them stand straight, can cover small weeds during the different stages of growth.

These unwanted plants can be removed or controlled by disturbing their growth with cultivation, mulch, hand removal, or chemical herbicides. The herbicides inhibit the growth of the seeds or stop the growth of the unwanted plants.

Google "Preen Weed control", Google, "Treflan", Google "Surflan Ornamental Label" for specific uses of these weeds controls. There are multiple websites to check. We are not recommending any specific product. Read and follow the directions on the label to understand your area and the weeds controlled. Pre-emergence herbicides placed as a granule or sprayed on a weed free soil surface will inhibit weeds from germinating. Most materials need to be watered into the soil or applied before a rainfall. The herbicide should keep weeds from getting started but not leach down into the soil to be picked up by gladiolus roots. Follow label directions on details of application. Some chemicals may need to be reapplied if soil is disturbed.

One major problem is weeds that keep growing year after year.

They are called perennials and they can be a perennial problem. Quackgrass is a perennial and propagates from seeds and underground stems called stolons. Cultivation only helps spread the pieces of stolon, which will sprout and grow. Field bindweed also has underground stems. Yellow nutsedge is not a perennial, but produces both seeds and little underground tubers which can stay in the soil many years before germinating. Canada thistle spreads by seeds and underground stems. Not using infested land for gladiolus best avoids this type of weed.

Preferably land is chosen that is relatively free of perennial weeds, such as quackgrass, yellow nutsedge, mugwort or bindweed. If your prospective planting area is not free of perennial weeds, spraying the growing weeds on undisturbed soil a year prior to planting with a short residual total vegetation control herbicide such as (glyphosate) can be very effective.

Google "Glyphosate"

For mugwort control, repeating applications for two seasons may be necessary. Adding a broad leaf herbicide to the glyphosate greatly improves the kill of bindweeds. Glyphosate is a systemic total weed control material that inhibits an enzyme need for plant growth. Every plant that comes into contact with it will be killed. It should only be used the year before in an area where gladiolus are to be planted. It can be used on the gladiolus planted area if weeds have emerged but the gladiolus have not broken the surface of the soil. Any gladiolus peeking thru the soil will be killed that comes in contact with glyphosate.

After setting the gladiolus corms in the trench or furrow, cover them with an excess of soil leaving a hill. Before the gladiolus shoots emerge too far, safely rake or cultivate the hill nearly level. This controls early weed seedlings.

Next you are ready for a pre-emergence material (before gladiolus are up) They are available in both granular and liquid formulations. Nutsedge is a particularly troublesome weed because it reproduces by seed and underground tubers. Always read and follow the pesticide label directions carefully.

Wading through hip high weeds when cutting flowers is not necessary. It is also much easier to harvest corms in weed free plots.

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