

# #bepesticidefree

## problem pests: Quackgrass

### What Exactly is it?

**Quackgrass** (*Agropyron repens*) is a perennial grass from Eurasia that invades lawns and gardens. It can spread through all garden situations except in very shaded areas. It is a cool-season plant, but will grow throughout the summer in Saskatchewan. In winter, the top spikes will die off, but the roots continue to grow until the ground freezes. It is considered an invasive plant species as it spreads easily both by seed and by roots! Quackgrass roots are rhizomatous and spread extensively underground making containment difficult. Seed dispersal occurs in both spring and fall.



### How to Deal With It:



#### Preventative Controls:

Keep your lawn and desired plants healthy to provide solid competition for quackgrass. Add organic compost to the soil to build nutrients to keep other plants thriving. Mow or cut the quackgrass regularly to prevent seed dispersal before seeds emerge.

#### How to Identify Quackgrass

##### Leaves:

-has a slender stalk with flat and pointed leaf blades

##### Stem:

-can grow from 30cm - 1m tall

##### Seeds/Flowers:

-sends up spikelets that grow in 2 rows on the same stem, growing alternately on either side  
-resembles wheat stalks to the untrained eye

##### Roots:

-are rhizomes that are yellowish-white, long with many branches and can be fleshy

### Mechanical Controls:

**Digging is the Key** - The process is time-consuming and takes patience, but with diligence, this weed can be eradicated. You must be very careful when you dig up the plant, since even a bit of the root system left behind will grow new plants. Locate the most robust plant in the area and loosen the soil around it with a garden fork. Gently lift each tuft from the loose ground with your fingers, with the roots attached. If any parts break off, lift them out and drop them in a bucket. You may find that smaller plants are connected to this root, so lift those out as well and remove entire area. Place all plant matter in a bucket so as not to drop roots/parts to regenerate. When finished, leave the soil alone for about 2 weeks. Return and dig again, picking up bits of roots that were left behind. Replant with desired plants. Dig again in fall and spring to avoid over-wintering roots and newly established ones. It may take two seasons to completely get rid of it, but it should last a long time. Be sure to clean all equipment well before using again to avoid small root stems to spread.



Working for a  
Sustainable Future

www.environmentalsociety.ca  
info@environmentalsociety.ca  
ph 306.665.1915  
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## problem pests: Chickweed

### What Exactly is it?

Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) is a low-growing winter annual weed that is native to Europe. It can spread out into extensive mats. Chickweed spreads through both a shallow fibrous root system as well as by seed distribution. The seeds spread in early summer and germinate in the fall or early the following spring. Chickweed prefers cool, moist and shaded areas, but will grow in direct sun. It will invade any area that is open and exposed, especially between plants in gardens.

### How to Deal With It!

#### Preventative Controls:

A good thick lawn will prevent chickweed from growing. Follow good lawn care practices (see SES's Ten Steps to a Healthy Lawn). Lawns that are stressed or thinning are more susceptible to weeds.

#### Mechanical Controls:

You may want to dig up the larger plants and maybe even use them in a recipe. Be sure to dig up the roots loosening with a trowel and your fingers; don't leave any of the fibres behind. If you manage to get all the roots, and lay the CGM on time (see below), you should control your chickweed over a couple of growing seasons. Don't just yank up the plant. The roots will react and grow!

#### Organic Controls:

**Corn Gluten Meal (CGM)** is a protein produced from the by-product from the corn milling Process that can be found at most garden centres. When spread over a lawn or garden area, CGM will stop many seeds from sprouting. It will **not** kill existing chickweed plants, but it will stop the seeds that it has spread for next year. Since chickweed is an annual plant, with consistent application of CGM, chickweed should be under control in two to four growing seasons. It is very important to apply CGM in the **late summer** as well as **spring** since chickweed is a fall-sprouting plant that over-winters before flowering and setting seeds again in early spring. Do not spread CGM directly after over-seeding your lawn or you will kill your grass seeds.



### How to Identify Chickweed

#### Growth Habit:

-grows in low-lying and almost 'bushy' mats

#### Stems:

-long and slender and trail along the ground

#### Leaves:

-bright green and  
-spade-shaped or heart-shaped

#### Flowers:

-has five petals but may look like ten because each petal is deeply notched (seen at left)

#### Taste:

-The plant can be eaten, it tastes succulent and slightly sweet, like corn.

For more information on Quackgrass and Chickweed:

Website: <http://gardenline.usask.ca>, [A Guide to Weeds in British Columbia PDF](#)

Book: The Gardener's Weed Book Earth-Safe Controls, by Barbara Pleasant  
Field Guide to Noxious Weeds and other Selected Invasive Plants of British Columbia, B.C. Ministry of Ag and Lands



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