

Lawn problems:

Annual meadow grass

Annual meadow grass (*poa annua*) is the grass you see growing where no others will – rooftops, gutters, cracks in the pavements – and, given a chance, your garden. Though it doesn't pose a real threat to your existing lawn (it won't take over existing grasses or sap nutrients from them) the effect on your lawn's appearance can be a real headache for some.

Annual meadow grass is coarser than most fescues found in lawns and appears quite distinct from the grasses around it. It carries seed heads throughout the year, even when mown very short, and is usually a slightly lighter colour than the surrounding grasses making your lawn look patchy. This will be particularly obvious in autumn and winter when the finer grasses have finished growing whilst the coarser annual meadow grass continues. Frosts exaggerate this effect as *poa annua* is affected less than most lawn varieties.

Why is it in my lawn?

Since there are no chemical treatments available for *poa annua*, and this weed grass is so prevalent and constantly seeding, it's impossible to guarantee that turf will be free from it when first supplied. We buy high-quality seed from reputable suppliers to ensure that it is not present in our seed-mix. Annual meadow grass is easily introduced to established lawns by bird droppings, from topsoil and even by the wind if *poa annua* is growing widely nearby. Alkaline soils are especially susceptible since most other grass species don't grow as well in these conditions.

How do I treat it?

If the affected area isn't particularly large you can spot treat the offending plants with round-up or a similar product. Be careful when doing this as all plants treated, whether a weed or not, will be killed. If you'd rather not use chemicals, cutting across the base and roots with a sharp knife will also kill the plant.

Larger areas can be more difficult to treat. To begin with, you should feed your lawn well in March when the grasses will be starting to grow. This thickens up the lawn which can prevent the problem from worsening.

Since the roots of annual meadow grass are shallower than most turfgrass species, not watering your lawn often over summer can be an effective treatment. By waiting until your whole lawn looks to be suffering during a drought before watering, it's likely that the weed grass will have already died.

How do I prevent an infestation of Annual Meadow Grass?

- If seeding your own lawn, be sure to check the seed mixture for *poa annua*.
- Once established, keeping your lawn healthy, lush and dense will make it harder for any seeds introduced by birds or on the wind to establish themselves.
- If you do begin to spot annual meadow grass, dealing with the problem early is vital. Since it seeds all year round, even when cut short, left unchecked the problem will worsen quickly and potentially get out of hand.

Since annual meadow grass is far coarser than most fescues found in household or ornamental lawns, it appears quite distinct from the grasses around it.

