

Giant Ragweed Should be a Driver Weed For Many Indiana Farmers

As planting season is wrapping up many Indiana farmers are likely to start turning their attention towards postemergence herbicide applications. Many of the corn acres in the state likely have already received a postemergence application and many soybean fields will begin to be sprayed in the next couple of weeks. In previous seasons it has been common to drive around and see farmers making postemergence herbicide applications to fields containing giant ragweed that was well over the recommended 4-6" height. This is a trend that is concerning to Purdue Weed Science.

Giant ragweed is a troublesome weed that emerges early in the season and grows quite rapidly, outcompeting crops and other weeds for cherished sunlight. The plant grows until it reaches about 1 ft. of height over other plants to maximize its light harvesting ability. This often leads to giant ragweed reaching the 4-6" height that is recommended for postemergence herbicide applications well before other weeds species.

A lack of a residual herbicide at planting and farmers hesitation to spray when only the giant ragweed is at the appropriate height often leads to situations where postemergence applications, regardless of the herbicide of choice, are being made to giant ragweed plants that are much larger than the labeled height or would be recommended by Purdue Weed Science. These post applications on large giant ragweed place great selection pressure for herbicide resistance that has led to past cases of glyphosate and ALS-inhibitor resistance and can certainly lead to future cases of herbicide resistance. The number of postemergence herbicides for control of giant ragweed is already limited, but continued applications to large plants will only decrease the number available options in the future.



A 6-inch tall giant ragweed in a corn field with multiple grass species ranging from 1-2 inches in height.

Giant Ragweed-Driver Weed

Those producers who know that fields have a history of giant ragweed, especially those who did not apply a residual herbicide, should key in on this weed species as a driver weed. The term “driver weed” refers to the weed species that dictates or drives herbicide management decisions for a particular field. The rapid growth of giant ragweed should always position it as a species that determines the appropriate timing for a postemergence herbicides. All too often we see where producers were reluctant to make a postemergence application to 4-6” giant ragweed because of a lack of other weeds at that size and the potential need for a second postemergence application because of the extensive time till soybean canopy. Waiting for the other weeds to emerge or for the soybean canopy to further develop will only allow the giant ragweed to continue to grow well past a manageable height and likely effect yields. Farmers need to focus on giant ragweed as their driver weed as in many of these situations it is the species to has the largest potential to reduce yields if not managed. It should also be realized that fields with heavy infestations of giant ragweed are likely to need multiple postemergence applications and that single postemergence herbicide programs are not a reality of effective weed management programs.

As farmers and consultants continue or begin to scout fields keep in mind that if giant ragweed is present amongst other smaller weeds, that it should drive the decision for making a postemergence herbicide application. Fields with a history of giant ragweed pressure should be especially noted and be prioritized to be sprayed before giant ragweed reaches 6 inches in height.

Additional Resources

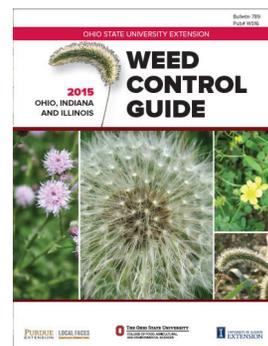
More information on Giant Ragweed Control can be accessed at the following links:

Take Action: Management of Herbicide-Resistant Giant Ragweed



https://ag.purdue.edu/btny/weedscience/Documents/50737_12_TA_FactSheet_GiantRagweed_V3_LR.pdf

2015 Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois Weed Control Guide: Control of Problem Weeds, pgs 175-176



https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=WS-16-W

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