

## Be persistent in battling common chamberbitter

By Larry Williams



*Photo by Alabama Cooperative Extension*

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**I**n your lawn and landscape beds, do you have the weed that has leaves resembling those of a miniature mimosa tree?

On the undersides are many small, round balls. If you don't have this troublesome weed, you are certainly the exception. It's called chamberbitter and it is very common in North Florida.

The bad news is there is little information on the biology of this difficult-to-control weed. But it can be controlled if you are persistent.

Chamberbitter, botanically known as *Phyllanthus urinaria*, is found throughout Florida. It germinates from early summer through early fall. The most distinct feature of this weed is the numerous, small, smooth, round fruits attached to the undersides of its stems.

Chamberbitter is very competitive in our lawns. It produces a great number of viable seeds and it has good shade-tolerance but will grow in full sun.

Early detection and action are important. Once it sets seed, control is that much more difficult. To begin the battle against chamberbitter, apply a pre-emergent herbicide when the soil starts warming up, usually around the first of May.

According to the 2002 University of Florida Pest Control Guide for Turfgrass Managers (available at <http://turf.ufl.edu/data/2002PestControlGuide.pdf>), atrazine or isoxaben (Gallery) provides good control. Isoxaben (Gallery) is safe for all the warm-season grasses. Atrazine, however, is not registered for use on bahia grass or bermuda grass. Atrazine is safe to use on centipede grass and St. Augustine grass when used according to label directions.

It is important to note, however, that atrazine can be used only twice in a year. Also, it should never be applied in the root zone of any ornamental plant.

Once the chamberbitter weeds have germinated, a post-emergent herbicide may be necessary. Nonselective herbicides containing glyphosate, such as Roundup, are effective but only in areas such as landscape beds where the weed is isolated and you can keep the spray off desirable plants. In lawns, you must use selective post-emergent herbicides that won't hurt the grass.

Barry Brecke, UF-IFAS Extension weed scientist, recommends atrazine or simazine applied twice, with applications spaced about three weeks apart.

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Atrazine + bentazon (sold under the trade name, Prompt) may be a little more effective. Again, plan on two applications spaced about three weeks apart. Products containing mixtures of 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP or MCPA (Weed-B-Gon, Weed Stop, etc.) applied twice, seven days apart, may also be used at recommended rates.

If you do decide to use any of the herbicides mentioned, follow the label directions to the letter.

Mechanical pulling is always an option. However, be sure not to shake the soil from the root system, as it will just spread the seeds.

For more information about gardening in our area, visit the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension Web site at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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