

Weed Control

Weed control during the first two years is probably the most difficult problem in establishing a blueberry plantation. Blueberries grow rather slowly for the first year or two and their growth and survival can be severely reduced by weed competition. Perennial grasses should be eliminated by ploughing or with herbicides the summer and fall before planting. The planting rows should be thoroughly disced and weed-free at the time of planting. Mulching is extremely helpful in weed control. Most blueberry growers try to maintain a weed-free strip at least 4 feet wide centered on the plant row throughout the life of the plantation. The middles between rows can be allowed to cover with grasses which are maintained by mowing. Native

grasses or centipede are much superior to Bahia-grass, which grows too fast and requires very frequent mowing.

Herbicides can be useful in controlling weeds in blueberries if used with great care. Paraquat, glyphosphate, and pre-emergence herbicides can all destroy blueberry plants if misused, and some are highly toxic to man. Carefully read the safety precautions on the label before using any herbicide. If necessary, check with your county agent as to safe use. When plants are small, herbicides are usually applied with a backpack sprayer. When plants become larger, herbicides can be applied to the soil around the plants with a tractor-drawn sprayer that is shielded to keep the spray from touching the blueberry plants. For proper herbicides to use in young and older blueberry plantations consult Table 2.

Table 2. Some herbicides used for weed control in blueberries.

Common Name	Trade Name	Formu- lation	Rate**	Time of Application	Weeds Controlled and Remarks
Dichlobenil	Casoron	WP G	8-12 lbs. 100-150 lbs.	Early spring before weed seed germination or after cultivation.	Annual broadleaf weeds and grasses. Follow application immediately with shallow mechanical incorporation. Do not use on light sandy soil. Do not graze livestock in treated area. Do not apply within 1 month of harvest.
Dinoseb	General Weed Killer	OS,WE	1-2 qts.	Anytime during growing season.	Controls broadleaf weeds and grasses. Use 10-20 gals diesel oil or weed oil. Up to 4 applications per yr. Use only on plantings 2 yrs. or older. Do not treat 30 days before harvest. Apply before weeds reach 6 in. tall. Avoid contacting crop foliage, blossoms, or fruit clusters.
Paraquat	Paraquat	CL	1-2 qts.	Apply before emergence of new shoots.	Controls most annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. Perennial weeds are desiccated. Use a non-ionic spreader at 8 oz/100 gals. Apply as a coarse spray to avoid drift injury from fine spray mist.
Simazine	Princep	G WP WDG	50-100 lbs. 2 ½-5 lbs. 2.2 - 4.4 lbs.	Early spring or split application in the spring and fall.	Controls certain annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. Use ½ the rate recommended on plantings less than 6 months old. Do not apply when fruit is present. Rate depends on soil texture.
Terbacil	Sinbar	WP	2-4 lbs.	Apply either in the spring or after harvest in the fall before weeds emerge or during early seedling stage of weed growth.	Controls annual grasses and broadleaf weeds with partial control of perennials at higher rates. Amount of product used will vary according to soil texture and organic matter. Do not use on sand or loamy sand with less than 3% organic matter. Avoid contact of foliage and fruit with spray or mist. Do not use on eroded areas where subsoil or roots are exposed. Do not use on unhealthy bushes.

* WP-wettable powder, G-granule, OS,WE-oil soluble, water emulsifiable, CL-concentrated liquid, WDG-water dispersible granule.

** Product per treated acre.