

WEED WIZARD

Weed Control in Pansies

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Figure 1. Pansies in flower

With their myriad of color combinations, ease of growth, and ability to take cool weather, pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*) have become one of the premier bedding plants of the Southeast (Figure 1). Many gardeners and landscapers incorporate large plantings of pansies into their landscape. Like most garden plants, however, pansies can be troubled by weeds. Most of the weeds encountered in pansy plantings are annual type plants (i.e. common chickweed, annual bluegrass, etc.). In small pansy plantings most weeds can easily be controlled with mulches and a occasional hand-weeding.

People often turn to herbicides to control their weed problem in larger planting. The number of herbicides that are available for use in pansies is limited. Pre-emergent herbicides include the following:

PRE-EMERGENT HERBICIDES FOR CONTROLLING BROADLEAF AND GRASS WEEDS IN PANSIES.	
TRADE NAMES	ACTIVE INGREDIENT
Dimension	dithiopyr
Pendulum 2G(Granular)	pendimethalin
Pennant	metolachlor
Surflan (Granulars and Sprayable)	oryzalin
XL	benefin and oryzalin



Although this list is small, the pre-emergent herbicides listed can provide excellent control of many weeds coming from seed. Pre-emergent herbicides are designed to control germinating seeds. There must be a rain / watering event of approximately 0.5 inch within a week of herbicide application in order to activate the herbicide. Most pre-emergent herbicides are available in both granular and sprayable forms. Granular herbicides are more popular with homeowners as they require no mixing and are more forgiving when an application error is made. It should be noted that the list of herbicides above do not control all possible weeds. There are no “Silver Bullets” when it comes to herbicides. Most of these herbicides or herbicide combinations will provide 80 to 95% control of the weeds from seed. Some weeds will be encountered that are not controlled with pre-emergent herbicides, but most of these weeds can be easily hand removed. All of these pre-emergent herbicides are meant to be used on established pansies. Established means that the plants have to be in the ground for some time, and the soil has been settled around the root ball. Settling the soil around the root ball is achieved by firmly pressing the soil around the root ball after planting and watering the plants in. Labels often stress that word “established” to avoid pre-emergent herbicides from harming plants. If the pre-emergence herbicide comes in granular and sprayable formulation, consider using the granular formulation, as it reduces contact of the desirable plant with the herbicide.

There is only one herbicide labeled for the control of emerged grasses in established pansies:

POST-EMERGENT HERBICIDES FOR CONTROLLING GRASSES IN PANSIES.	
TRADE NAMES	ACTIVE INGREDIENT
Vantage	sethoxydim

Vantage herbicide is mixed with water and sprayed over the top of pansies to control grasses that are emerged and actively growing. Vantage has no pre-emergent activity, and will not prevent the germination of seeds. One should avoid the application of Vantage sprays on hot sunny days as minor damage to pansy plants could occur.

The above lists of herbicides represent herbicides labeled for use on pansies at the time this article was written. Herbicide labeling can change, so make sure that you read and understand the label before using any pesticide. As herbicides go off patent, many third party manufacturers may market herbicides under a different trade name, so buyer beware. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup®, is now available in more than 50 formulations. Just remember a quick canopy of pansy flowers and foliage will help out-compete the weeds. Site pansies where they will receive approximately 4 to 6 hours of direct sunlight. Make sure the pansy site is well drained, and the soil is amended with organic matter. Test soil and make sure pansies are provided adequate fertilization. Most importantly, make sure that the pansy bed is mulched after planting. As well as adding organic matter, maintaining soil moisture and soil temperature, mulches help prevent weeds from germinating! A good 2 to 4 inch layer of mulch (pinebark, pinestraw, or shredded hardwood bark) should help make for health, happy pansies. Happy gardening!

