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Citrus Weed Spotlight

Natal grass

Melinis repens (previously *Rhynchelytrum repens or R. roseum*)

By Stephen H. Futch, David W. Hall and Brent Sellers

LIFE CYCLE: warm-season annual, but can perennate in South Florida

LEAVES: flat or folded, linear to 12 inches long and 0.5 inches wide, smooth or hairy; often has waxy coating ("glaucous")

SHEATHS: usually hairless, but sometimes with long, stiff hairs

STEM: to 4 feet tall, reclines at base with rooting at lower nodes; nodes usually hairy

INFLORESCENCE: loose, open panicle 8 inches long by 2.5 inches wide; purple to reddish to pinkish, fading to silvery white with age; silky hairs contribute to a fluffy appearance

PROPAGATED BY: seeds

COMMENT: often called "red top" because of seed head that turns glistening red or purple; found in sandy open soils, open woods, disturbed sites and open fields; found throughout Florida, north into Georgia and west across southern states to California; native to South Africa and western Asia

CONTROL: Bromacil, indaziflam, norflurazon, pendimethalin and simazine provide pre-emergence control of natal grass emerging from seed. Fluazifop, sethoxydim and glyphosate provide good to excellent post-emergence control, whereas paraquat dichloride provides excellent control on small grasses.

Stephen H. Futch is a University of Florida multi-county Extension agent at the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred; David W. Hall is a retired botanist with the University of Florida departments of botany and natural sciences in Gainesville; Brent Sellers is a University of Florida associate professor at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center at Ona.