



Crabgrasses

O & T Guide W-4

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Large and smooth crabgrass, *Digitaria sanguinalis* and *D. ischaemum*, are non-native summer annual grasses that produce seed on long, slender branches, and have reddish or purple stems that are flat in cross-section. Although the stems are mostly erect, the plants often have a spreading growth pattern because the stem nodes can develop roots. Several things distinguish large from smooth crabgrass: large crabgrass is covered with long hairs, generally larger, and produces two rows of seeds per branch, while smooth crabgrass has few to no hairs, is usually smaller, and produces three rows of seeds per branch. Large crabgrass is also known as hairy or purple crabgrass; smooth crabgrass is also known as small crabgrass.



Large crabgrass



Large crabgrass

The stems of both plants may be erect or spreading, are branched at the base, flattened in cross-section, and green to purple or red in color. Large crabgrass stems are covered with long hairs while smooth crabgrass is mostly hairless. Large crabgrass stems can grow to about 2 ft. tall and smooth to about 16 in. tall.

The leaves are flat (rolled when budding) and have a prominent midvein. Large crabgrass leaves are 1-8 in. long and 0.15-0.50 in. wide; smooth crabgrass leaves are 0.6-3.5 in. long and 0.1-0.3 in. wide. The

base of each leaf forms a sheath that extends down the stem; large crabgrass sheaths grow up to 6 in. long and smooth up to 4.5 in. long. The sheaths and leaf surfaces of smooth crabgrass are mostly hairless, although some long hairs may be present where the leaf base joins the sheath.



Smooth crabgrass

Both plants produce seed on long, slender branches that emerge from the stem ends. The branches are 2-6 in. long with 3-11 branches per flowering stem. Seeds grow in alternating rows on only one side of each branch; large crabgrass has two rows of seeds and smooth has three rows. Smooth crabgrass seeds are generally smaller; they grow to about 0.1 in. long while large crabgrass seeds grow to about 0.2 in. All seeds are green to purple in color. Both plants have a fibrous root

system that emerges from the plant base or from lower stem nodes. Both plants reproduce through seed only.



Smooth crabgrass

Management:

- Manually remove plants before they produce seed
- Vigorous, healthy turf can compete with crabgrass and reduce infestations
- Pre-emergent herbicides are effective

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