

City scraps herbicide use on sports field dandelions

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Edmonton is scrapping its current weed control program for combating dandelions on city sports fields.

An [iron chelate herbicide has been used on more than 1,000 sports fields](#) since 2017 to kill dandelions that were [wreaking havoc on community soccer and football fields](#). One spray of the eco-herbicide breaks down cell tissues and kills the pesky weed quickly while causing them to turn a dark red colour.

But the city will not lean on the chemical this dandelion season and will instead resort to mowing and other means that it believes can be as effective and save money. Dandelion season typically peaks in May and June.

“The city will no longer use iron chelate on sports fields,” spokesman Ashish Mohan said in an email to Postmedia Thursday. “Conventional herbicides will be used responsibly, in accordance with provincial guidelines, to keep the fields usable as they are just as effective and are also more financially responsible.”

The previous program, including use of the herbicide and added mowing cycles, cost \$3 million annually. Fields needed to be treated up to four times throughout the summer and mowing was increased to weekly cycles to prevent the yellow weeds from getting to seed, which can then spread 2,000 seeds as far as seven kilometres.

Prior to the iron chelate, herbicides weren’t used on sports fields since the summer of 2015 when the city banned cosmetic herbicide usage. There is an exemption for plants defined by the province as noxious weeds in order to reduce the spread, but dandelions don’t qualify under the exemption.

Goats not coming baaa-ck

The city will be down one tool this year to tackle invasive weeds with the [end of the three-year goat pilot project at Rundle Park last year](#). About 400 goats roamed the park for three summers eating weeds as an environmentally-friendly method to control the spread.

Goats will not be back this summer and the city said it will take this time to monitor the effectiveness of the pilot project before making future decisions.

“As part of this evaluation, weeds at the GoatWorks site at Rundle Park will be monitored. Weed control in the city will be performed according to the integrated pest management policy and as resources allow,” spokesman Kris Berezanski wrote in an email to Postmedia.

Residents are encouraged to report invasive weeds found on their own property and on city land through the 311 app, and remove them.

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