Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*) originated in Central and South America. It is a member of the pigweed family and forms carpets of sharp burs. The creeping form of this plant allows it to beat out desirable plants, like turf grass. Khaki weed can reproduce from seed and by lateral stems.Seeds germinate after spring or summer rain, develop a deep taproot and stems form during summer. Roots form at the nodes on the stems and produce new plants that thicken like ground cover. It's deep tap root makes it very drought resistant, which helps it to establish even during dry periods. In warmer climates the weed can be a perennial.

Pre-emergence control options

Unfortunately there are no pre-emergence products currently labeled for Khaki weed. The active ingredient isoxaben is a pre-emerge product that could have some impact but it will require a half to one inch water event to assure activation.

Post-emergence control options

Products containing the following active ingredients: 2,4-D, MCPP, MCPA, carfentrazone, dicamba, metsulfuron, triclopyr, and/or fluroxypyr. Products that combine two or more of these are more likely to provide control. Other than metsulfuron, any of these products can delay spring green-up of warm-season grasses if applied during spring transition. St. Augustine grass can be particularly sensitive.
Glyphosate is effective if the plant is actively growing and bare spots around the treated area are acceptable.

Surfactants

Surfactants are typically helpful when treating broadleaves, so read the label and use one if recommended. In the case of khaki weed, it may help increase herbicidal uptake through the waxy leaf surface.

Application Timing

The optimum time for treating broadleaves is when there is adequate soil moisture and plants are young and actively growing. Plants that are suffering due to lack of moisture or not growing are much less likely to be controlled.

March, 2014 by Dr. Casey Reynolds, Wichita Master Gardener Becky Trammel, Wichita agent David Graf

A Khaki weed control test plot is planned for Wichita County, spring and summer of 2015.