

Weed Management for Young Citrus Groves in South Alabama

► Weed interference during citrus grove establishment can reduce tree growth and delay early production. Effective weed management requires the use of pre- and postemergent herbicides. For this, growers must know available herbicides and their uses to choose the best applications for their operations. Widely used herbicides are featured here along with the weeds they control.

In young citrus plantings, weeds compete for water and nutrients, restrict grove access, and may complicate freeze-protection activities. Some weed species also serve as alternate hosts for insect pests and plant pathogens. An effective weed management program is, therefore, essential. While hand weeding may be used in limited situations, most citrus producers rely on a combination of pre- and postemergent herbicides for consistent control.

Preemergent herbicides provide residual control by preventing weed seed germination and emergence. They are most effective when applied to weed-free soil. In south Alabama citrus, a late-winter application can suppress spring and early summer weeds; a midsummer application can reduce late-summer and early fall weeds; and a fall application can help manage winter annuals.

Many preemergent products require rainfall, irrigation, or shallow incorporation for activation. It is important to read the product label for specific details. In first-year plantings, delay use or apply with spray shields to prevent contact with young trees, and apply only after the soil has settled to reduce the risk of root uptake and injury.

Postemergent herbicides control emerged weeds. They may work systemically (move within the plant) or by contact (injure only treated tissue). Postemergent products are most effective on small, actively growing weeds and often provide limited suppression of established perennials. To reduce citrus injury, minimize drift and trunk or foliage contact by using proper nozzles, spray volumes, wind restrictions, and shields as needed in young plantings.

Weed mats, made of a geotextile fabric (figures 1 and 2), can supplement or, in some situations, reduce the need for herbicides in young citrus plantings. When properly installed and maintained, fabrics can provide multiyear weed suppression and improve soil moisture retention.



Figure 1. Weed mat made of geotextile fabric



Figure 2. Use of weed mat to suppress weeds and improve soil moisture retention

Table 1. Preemergent Herbicides for Citrus

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Planting Year	Years 2 to 3	Bearing Trees	Weeds Controlled	Group Number
Alion*	Indaziflam	1 month after planting of potted plants	Yes	Yes (PHI: 7 days)	Annual grasses & broadleaf	29
Chateau EZ	Flumioxazin	Yes (protection required)	Yes	Yes (PHI: 3 days)	Annual grasses & broadleaf	14
Surflan	Oryzalin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Annual grasses & broadleaf	3
Solicam DF	Norfluazon	Yes	Yes	Yes (PHI: 30 days)	Annual/perennial grasses, broadleaf & suppression nutsedge	13

* Alion can severely injure or kill young trees. Use with extreme caution in the first year and use only with spray guards and after the soil is settled. Do not use Alion on bare-root plants in the first year.

Table 2. Postemergent Herbicides for Citrus

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Systemic or Contact	Weeds Controlled	Group Number
Roundup*	Glyphosate	Systemic	Nonselective	9
Rely 280	Glufosinate	Contact	Nonselective	10
Aim EC	Carfentrazone	Contact	Nonselective	E
Poast	Sethoxydim	Systemic	Annual & perennial grasses	1
Fusilade DX	Fluazifop	Systemic	Annual & perennial grasses	IA
Treevix	Saflufenacil	Systemic	Broadleaf weeds	14

* Applications of glyphosate in late summer or early fall may cause premature fruit drop on early maturing citrus cultivars. When using nonselective postemergent herbicides, avoid contact with leaves or green bark, as this may cause plant injury.

This information is a general reference, and growers should always follow the current product label, as formulations and active ingredients may change. For more information, see the *Florida Citrus 2025-2026 Production Guide* on the University of Florida, IFAS Extension website.



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For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit aces.edu/directory.

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