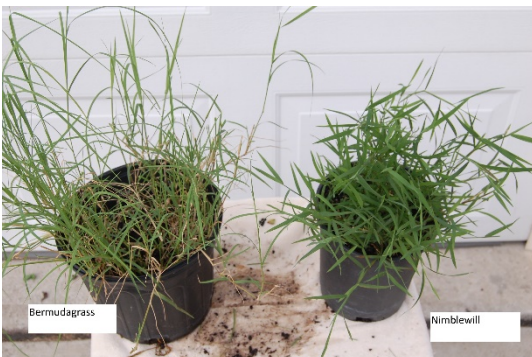
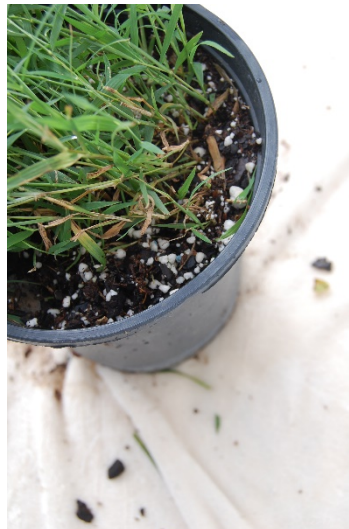


## Weed Focus: Nimblewill

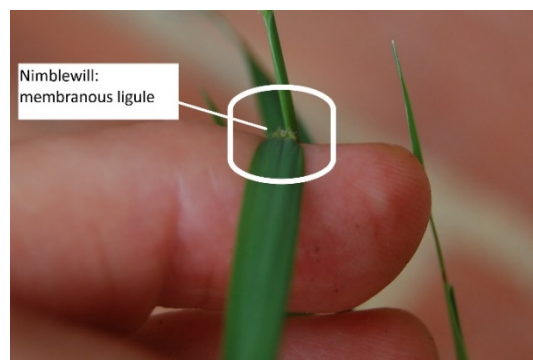
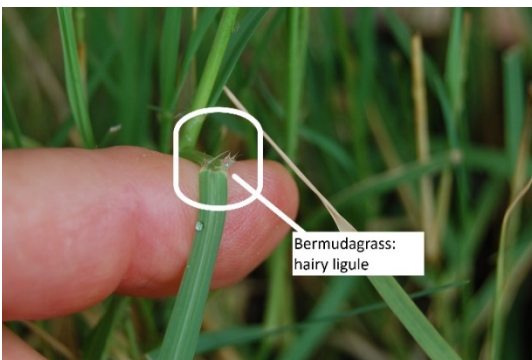
Sharon Freeman, Ramon Leon, Deidre Harmon, and Matt Poore

Nimblewill (*Muhlenbergia schreberi*) is a warm-season perennial grass. It is a North American native that commonly invades pastures. It resembles bermudagrass very closely and is commonly confused with bermudagrass. When you hear a complaint from a grazier that his/her stock will not eat bermudagrass, it is likely because it isn't bermudagrass at all. It's nimblewill.

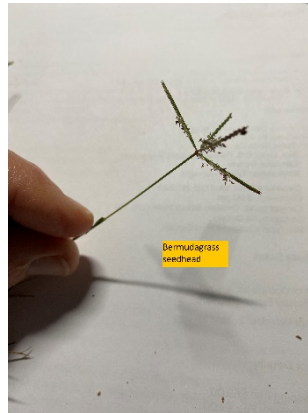
Nimblewill has a similar growth habit to bermudagrass. It spreads by above ground stolons and seeds. It doesn't, however, have rhizomes, like bermudagrass. Its stems tend to be finer than those of bermudagrass and they are often brown at the base and somewhat more erect. The leaves of nimblewill are often shorter (1-2 inches long) and more oval than those of



*Nimblewill (top, left), nimblewill base (center), comparison of leaves and stems (top, right), comparison of plants (middle, left), bermudagrass ligule (lower, left), and nimblewill ligule (lower, right)*



bermudagrass. It has a membranous ligule, while bermudagrass has a hairy ligule. (photos above) The seedheads also look quite different (photos below).



Nimblewill prefers some shade and is often found in rich soils along woodlands or under trees. It also prefers damp locations; however, it tolerates a wide range of soil conditions. Like bermudagrass, it goes dormant during the winter.

There is no known toxicity associated with nimblewill. It is not palatable and it is difficult to get livestock to consume it. There are reports of cattle learning to eat it, but they are rare.

Control in pastureland: Because nimblewill is a grass, control can be challenging. It will not respond to herbicides that control broad-leaf plants, such as 2,4-D. Its root system is fairly shallow, so small patches can be pulled up; however, any small pieces of stolon left in the soil can germinate to re-start the infestation. This method is not practical on the scale of a large pasture. Unfortunately, there are no herbicides labeled for nimblewill control in pastures. There are some turf herbicides that provide limited control; however, their use in pastures is considered off label and is not advised. Glyphosate will kill nimblewill but is not selective, so early detection followed by spot applications and re-establishment of the desired pasture plants is the most effective management strategy.

Disclaimer: The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this article does not imply endorsement by North Carolina State University or the

*Center for Environmental Farming Systems*, nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.