

June 26, 2005

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Chinch Bugs—Have you found them in your lawn?

Chinch bugs, although a very small insect pest, can infest a lawn in great numbers and cause serious damage if not controlled. St. Augustinegrass is the primary victim, but chinch bugs have been known to affect other lawn grasses such as zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, and bermudagrass.

These sap-sucking insects seem to prefer hot and dry areas of your lawn and may be a lawn problem from late spring through fall. The adults will be 1/6 to 1/5 of an inch long with black bodies and white wings—each wing having a triangular black mark. Each life cycle lasts 7 to 8 weeks and there can be up to 5 generations per year in Texas. Damage to St. Augustine begins with expanding, irregular patches of yellow-stunted grass that may become 'dead grass' if the population of feeding chinch bugs is above the 'threshold level'.

To know if chinch bugs are the critters causing damage to your lawn, hammer an empty coffee can (open at both ends) one-inch into the soil beneath stunted areas and add water. The chinch bugs should float to the top. Another method is to spray water mixed with a small amount of liquid dishwashing detergent onto the infected sites—the chinch bugs (and some other insects as well) should come to the top of the canopy. The best method is to just get on your hands and knees and search into the canopy of the lawn. To locate them, search sites that immediately border the infected areas. Once you have determined that chinch bugs are the culprits, use an insecticide for control and always remember to 'read the label and follow label directions for application'. Remember, diazinon and chlorpyrifos are no longer available—insecticides containing bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, or permethrin seem to work well.

White Grubs—It's time to watch out for these pests!

Have you ever had areas in your lawn that die and turn straw-colored? Can these areas be lifted by hand or be rolled up from the ground like a carpet? If so, your lawn may have been damaged by white grubs.

While the beetle stage of their life cycle feed on ornamental plants, the larval stage that develops from the eggs laid in the soil is what causes the lawn damage. Larva is also referred to as the "white grub" stage of the May or June beetles. These root-feeding "grubs" are creamy-white and C-shaped with three pairs of legs, and their damage normally occurs during the summer and fall time period. They feed on grass root systems, and damaged areas begin as weakened or dying grass in irregular shapes. Eventually, if the population and damage is severe, these areas in your lawn will die. To locate the grubs, dig into the infected sites with a spade or shovel to a depth of at least 4 inches. Finding white grubs in numbers of 3 to 5 per square foot suggests insecticide treatment is needed. Products of choice are insecticides containing imidacloprid or halofenozide. If grub damage already exists, use products such as carbaryl or trichlorfon.

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