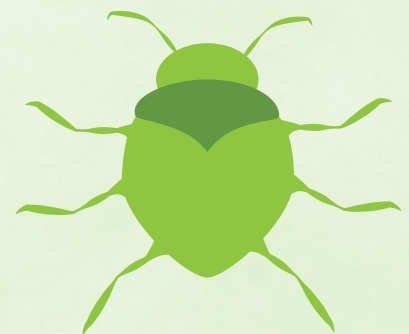




LAWN PESTS

COMMON LAWN PESTS &
INSECTS IN PITTSBURGH

HOW TO DIAGNOSE,
PREVENT AND TREAT
THEM



DREAM
GREENER 

PEST FREE LAWNS

Introduction, diagnosis and management for lawn insects



Introduction

We all want our homes, lawns and gardens to be attractive and pest-free environments. But, because all living things seek food, water and shelter, sometimes we find unwanted "guests" in our yards. A pest can be anything from ants in the kitchen, weeds in the lawn, a fungus on the trees to a deer in the garden.

Most lawn pests are weeds, diseases, or insects, but they can also include rodents, birds, and pets. Nearly every lawn, golf course, or athletic field harbors some pests. It's when these pests begin causing intolerable damage that they need to be controlled.

TURFGRASS PESTS CAN BE DEFINED AS ANY ORGANISM CAUSING A MEASURABLE DETERIORATION IN THE AESTHETIC OR FUNCTIONAL VALUE OF A TURF.



DIAGNOSING TURFGRASS PROBLEMS

As with any problem in life or in lawn, proper diagnosis is key. Lawn problems can stem from factors relating to mowing, chemicals, moisture, pests or insects. While the main topic here is insects, let's first weed out the others.

MOWING

Mowing is one of the most abused and least understood lawn practices. Cutting the lawn too short reduces the root system to the point where the plant is unable to cope with adverse conditions. Infrequent mowing may shock plants depleting root reserves and excessive clippings can smother and kill the turf.



The main causes of turf problems are factors relating to mowing, chemicals, moisture, pests, and insects.

A gray or brown discoloration of lawn is usually due to dull mower blades tearing, splitting, or shredding of the tips of the grass blades.

CHEMICALS

Any type of fertilizer or weed killer may cause chemical burn if applied in excessive amounts or when grass blades are wet.

Always apply herbicides accurately at the manufacturer's recommended rate.

MOISTURE

Irrigating to the point of run off will impede the entrance of nutrients, insecticides, air, and water into the soil.

Alternately, frequent and light watering encourages shallow rooting which is susceptible to disease and insect attack.

Watering deeply when plants show signs of wilting is an excellent watering program.

COMMON PESTS

After inspecting those practices, then look at other lawn culprits that should be ruled out before continuing to insect damage.

MOLES & GOPHERS

Turfgrass areas infested with mole runs or tunnels become unsightly, uneven, and difficult to mow like the one on the right. Eradicate them with traps or poison bait.

SKUNKS

Smelly skunks may damage turf by rooting for grubs. The solution is to eliminate the grubs with an appropriate insecticide.

DOGS

Dead spots from dogs is the direct result of high soluble salt concentrations in their urine.

Damaged areas are usually round or slightly irregular in shape and variable in size as seen below. Nitrogen from urine with lower salt concentration may stimulate vigorous dark green growth.

DEER & WILDLIFE

Deer have been known to dig up a lawn in search of grubs, the fall favorite of many forest animals.

Many remedies are short-lived, and once the deer become accustomed to the odor or taste, they may become ineffective.



Billbugs

SPHENOPHORUS PARVULUS GYLLENHAL

DESCRIPTION

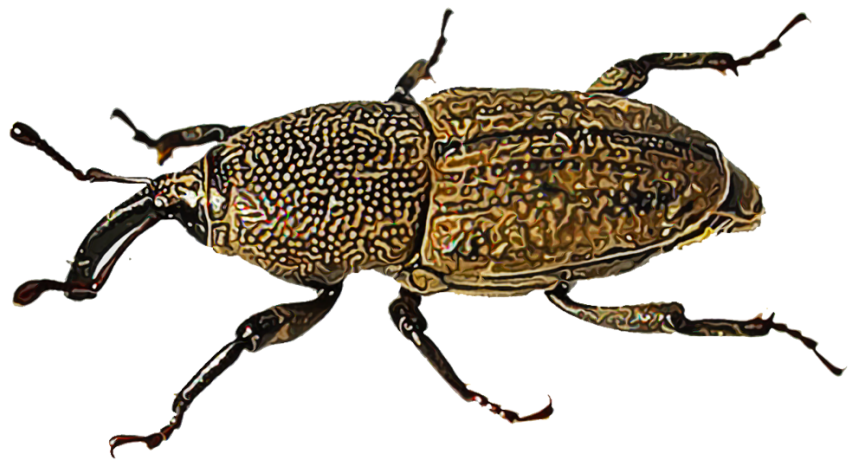
This destructive weevil has a long snout and an elongated thorax, which has resulted in the common name "billbug."

The 3/8-inch adults can be difficult to locate in turf, but they have a peculiar habit of walking on driveways and sidewalks in the spring as temperatures warm.

DAMAGE

The larval stage of this pest causes significant feeding damage on crowns and roots of grass. Damage frequently appears from late June through early August as spotty, straw-colored patches of Kentucky bluegrass that are scattered throughout the lawn.

A good indicator that billbug larvae are nearby is the presence of moist, light-brown frass near the crown of the plant.



CONTROL

Use of conventional insecticides remains the most effective method of suppressing adults in the spring.

Some individuals also make a summer rescue application, which is usually not as effective as a preventive application. This may be attributed to the fact that billbugs are usually more easily controlled in the spring before larvae hatch and mine the stems. If you wait and rely on a curative treatment, then damage may already be present.

Grubs

PHYLLOPHAGA

DESCRIPTION

Grubs are dirty white, soft bodied, and robust with a brown head and six well-developed legs. Grubs of the Japanese beetle, May or June beetle, northern masked chafer, European chafer, green June beetle, Oriental beetle, and Asiatic garden beetle may severely damage turf in our area.



DAMAGE

Heavy white grub infestations can destroy grass roots, causing the affected area to become spongy, which allows the sod to be rolled back like a piece of carpet. Evidence of grub damage, including patches of dead or dying turf, are visible during spring (April and May) and late summer and fall (September and October).

A good indication of a grub infestation is the presence of skunks, crows, or moles feeding on turf. However, remember that moles also feed on earthworms or insects living on shallow tree roots.

CONTROL

Apply a curative application during the summer when the grubs are small and actively feeding near the surface. Spring applications are not as effective.

Most insecticide formulations for preventive grub control state that the product should be applied before grubs hatch or prior to egg hatch.

A bacterial milky disease is a non-chemical product available to suppress Japanese beetle grubs, but may take 3-5 years to establish.

Sod Webworms

TOUMEYELLA LIRIODENDRI (GMELIN)

DESCRIPTION

Several species of sod webworms or "lawn moths" commonly infest home lawns. Groups of pale-brown moths with prominent snouts take flight over lawns on warm nights and these are adult sod webworms. Sod webworm larvae can cause major damage to residential turf grass, especially during periods of drought.



DAMAGE

Sod webworm larvae damage looks like brown patches up to the size of a baseball. Sometimes these patches are punctured with holes from birds searching for the webworms. The most severe damage usually occurs in July and August. Larvae chew off leaves and stems just above the crown.

CONTROL

Most control measures are applied to suppress larval populations when they are feeding on turf grass on an as-needed basis.

Sample the thatch for larvae to determine the number of sod webworms present before applying a registered insecticide. For best results, apply insecticides in late afternoon or early evening when larvae are active.

Insect-parasitic nematodes are available to curatively suppress various sod webworm species, but do not have a long shelf life as they're living organisms.

Chinch Bugs

BLISSUS LEUCOPTERUS HIRTUS (MONTANDON)

DESCRIPTION

Hairy chinch bugs can be frequent pests of home lawns. They are often associated with open, sunny areas. Chinch bug populations frequently go unnoticed because of their small size and coloration, which blends in with turf grass, thatch and drought.



DAMAGE

Damage frequently appears from early July through late August when the insects are actively feeding. Chinch bug nymphs and adults cause significant feeding damage by removing plant fluids and by injecting a toxin that causes the grass to yellow, turn reddish brown, and eventually die. Chinch bug damaged areas often turn into large patches of dead, brown grass.

CONTROL

Hairy chinch bugs can be repelled by the use of endophyte enhanced-turf grass cultivars like tall and fine fescue.

Conventional insecticides can suppress nymphs and adults throughout the summer when they are actively feeding on turf grass.

Sample the area to determine chinch bug density prior to applying any control measure. In general, small chinch bugs are easier to control than mature adults.

CHOOSING A QUALIFIED CONTRACTOR

If you determine that professional help is needed to manage the pests or insects in your lawn, make sure the contractor you choose meets all the legal and educational requirements that give them the privilege to service your home.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What is the correct identification of the pest?
- Can you show me the pest or evidence of the pest and/or damage?
- Are there effective control options besides pesticides, such as IPM?
- Do we need to use pesticides?
- When, where, and how should I check for the pest in the future?
- Does the treatment we choose need to be watered in?
- How soon can we use the area that was treated?
- How long will the treatment continue to control the pest?
- Will more treatments be needed, and if so, how often?
- Will renovation be required to fix the damage?
- What results can we expect?

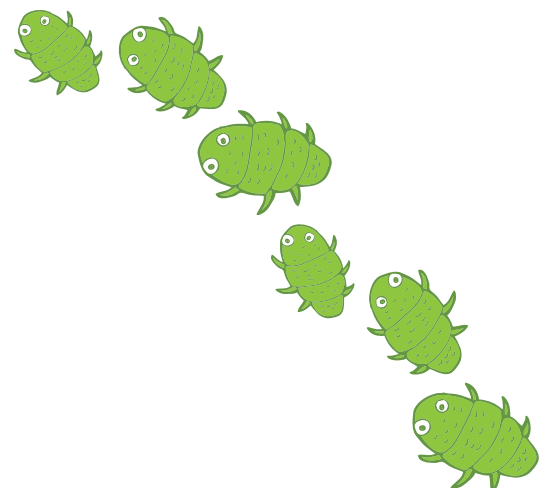
COMPANIES NEED:



Pennsylvania Pesticide
Applicator Certification or
Registered Technician
Card



Business license with
general liability
coverage specific for
pesticide usage



Lawn Care Professionals

Dream Greener Lawn & Landscape is licensed and insured, locally owned and operated year-round, based in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

Our service teams are led by experts, each with ten years or more of professional experience, focused exclusively on Lawn Mowing and Maintenance, Lawn Care and Treatment, Landscaping, and Snow and Ice Management.

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RESOURCES:

<https://extension.psu.edu/white-grubs-in-home-lawns>

<https://extension.psu.edu/chinch-bugs-in-home-lawns>

<https://extension.psu.edu/billbugs-in-home-lawns>

<https://extension.psu.edu/sod-webworms-in-home-lawns>

<https://extension.psu.edu/diagnosing-turfgrass-problems>