

## An Article of Interest What's bugging your lawn?

**PROBLEM:** Sod webworm.

**SYMPTOMS:** Irregular dead spots caused by small gray or tan caterpillars feeding on grass blades. You may also see zigzagging moths at night. Confirm the presence of webworms by soaking a small area with soapy water (two tablespoons of dish soap in a gallon of water). They'll come to the surface in about 10 minutes.

**SOLUTION:** Aerate to reduce thatch. Treat with appropriately labeled insecticide. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is an effective organic control.

**PROBLEM:** White grubs.

**SYMPTOMS:** Irregular dead spots caused by beetle larvae feeding on grass roots. Damage is worst in the fall. Dead turf pulls up easily, like a rug, revealing c-shaped larvae. Animals such as armadillos, skunks, and gophers dig up lawn to feed on grubs.

**SOLUTION:** Imidacloprid applied in late spring to early summer is the most effective chemical control. Predatory nematodes are a useful organic control.

**PROBLEM:** Chinch bugs.

**SYMPTOMS:** Irregular dry spots that turn yellow, then brown, as if drought-stressed. Caused by a tiny insect that sucks juices from grass blades. Chinch bugs usually infest St. Augustine lawns.

**SOLUTION:** Better care and aerating usually helps. 'Floritam' is a resistant variety of St. Augustine. Treat with an appropriately labeled insecticide.

**PROBLEM:** Dog damage.

**SYMPTOMS:** Small dead spot usually surrounded by lush, dark green grass. Caused by dogs making a pit stop.

**SOLUTION:** Simple but difficult — keep the dogs away. The dead spot will usually recover, especially if you soak it with a hose.

**PROBLEM:** Fungus disease.

**SYMPTOMS:** Quickly appearing and expanding dead spots caused by a number of difficult-to-diagnose lawn diseases.

**SOLUTION:** Most lawn diseases can be cured by adjusting cultural practices, such as watering or fertilizing less or watering or fertilizing at different times. Aerating also helps. Get help properly identifying the disease from a local nurseryman or cooperative extension service before using fungicide.

**PROBLEM:** Striped lawn.

**SYMPTOMS:** Healthy, green turf alternating with yellow stripes. Caused by uneven fertilizer application.

**SOLUTION:** Make sure you overlap wheel tracks when applying fertilizer with a drop-type spreader. If stripes are more tan or brown than yellow, your lawn mower may need to be adjusted to cut more evenly and prevent scalping.

**PROBLEM:** Brown areas or dry spots.

**SYMPTOMS:** One part of the lawn dries out before other areas. Caused by compacted soil, often due to foot traffic, or improperly adjusted, clogged, or broken sprinklers.

**SOLUTION:** Annual aerating will improve water penetration in compacted soils. Watch sprinklers run to make sure they operate properly. Adjust or repair as necessary.

**PROBLEM:** Thin grass and moss growing in shady areas

**SYMPTOMS:** Grass grows poorly in shady areas. Moss fills in just fine.

**SOLUTION:** Check the pH of the soil. If it's okay, increase sunlight by pruning trees. Reduce watering and aerate. Switch to a more shade-tolerant grass, such as fine fescue, or remove the grass and replace with a shade-tolerant ground cover, such as pachysandra or vinca.

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