Do You Really Need to Treat?

• A healthy lawn can co-exist with quite a large population of grubs. Pull back a one foot square piece of sod in a few locations and count the grubs you find there. Place a couple into a jar with enough soil to cover them and bring them to our office for a free identification. We are interested to know which species are showing up where.

• Consider treatment only if you find more than 4-6 European chafer grubs per square foot or 8-10 Japanese beetle grubs per square foot. Asiatic garden beetle grubs are smaller; you don’t need to consider treating them unless you have more than 18 per square foot. This is one reason why it’s important to know which species of grub you have.

• The adults fly to new locations to lay their eggs, so where you had grub damage last spring may not be where new eggs will be laid this fall. You really have to look. To avoid damaging your lawn, pull back squares of sod like a carpet. Replace these squares and water them well.

• The greater Plattsburgh area has been hit so hard by grubs since 2000 that if your neighbors have had damage you should consider treating your lawn preventatively for a year or two with the new product that has an extremely low toxicity, chlorantraniliprole, currently available under the brand name GrubEx™ (see What to Use for more information on this product).

Less-Toxic Control Options

• The bags that trap so many adult Japanese beetles are not an effective control for the adult or the grub. The traps are so attractive that they bring in more adults to your yard than you would have had otherwise. They have no effect on the other species of beetles, European chafer and Asiatic garden beetle or on the Japanese beetle grubs.

• Beneficial nematodes are microscopic, soil-dwelling worms that can be purchased to attack grubs. They are effective in trials but may or may not be successful in home lawn settings. To keep them alive, follow the directions exactly and apply them when you find young grubs first hatching in late August or early September.

• Another relatively new product is becoming available, halofenozide. It is a growth regulator, so it is less toxic, but it is only effective on the Japanese beetle grubs. It is not effective on European chafer or Asiatic garden beetle grubs, which are more common here. Read the product label carefully to be sure you are getting what you want.

• Milky spore is a bacterial disease that you apply to your soil, but it affects only Japanese beetle grubs, NOT the European chafer grubs. It takes a few years to build up in the soil to an effective level, and it doesn’t survive the winters north of Albany, so it doesn’t have time to become effective in our area. Therefore, it is not recommended for our area.

Grub Treatment Options

2013

There has been a lot of confusion lately about the best way to treat those fat, white grubs that cause so much damage to lawns in late spring and fall. The purpose of this brochure is to clarify and simplify some of the current grub control recommendations.

Please bear in mind, however, that healthy lawns can co-exist with quite a few grubs and do not need pesticide treatments. If your lawn is damaged only slightly each year, maybe you can live with the damage to avoid using pesticides at home.
Know Your Grubs

There are several different species of grubs that damage lawns. In Clinton and Essex Counties the most common species are European chafer, Oriental beetle, Japanese beetle and more recently, the Asiatic garden beetle.

These beetles have similar-looking larvae: fat, white grubs, curled into a “C”-shape. They eat the roots of grass plants, causing dead patches in lawns. Most of the damage happens in the fall but it becomes more noticeable in late spring, especially when skunks, crows and raccoons dig up turf looking for the grubs.

In the greater Plattsburgh area, European chafers have been causing the most damage to lawns, even though Japanese beetles adults are a common pest on ornamentals. This is why we would like to see samples of any grubs you find in your lawn.

Life Cycle—Important to Know

These beetles overwinter deep underground as a grub and move closer to the surface in May and June where they feed on grass roots, although most of their feeding is done the previous fall. Around mid-June they stop feeding, pupate and in early July, emerge from the soil as an adult beetle. Only Japanese beetles cause significant damage to trees, shrubs and flowers as an adult. The other species do little if any damage as adult beetles.

In northern New York, the adults mate in late July and lay their eggs in lawns. The eggs hatch around mid-August and the young grubs stay near the soil surface feasting on grass roots. Grubs are most vulnerable at this stage so this is where control methods are targeted. They do most of their damage in the fall, but it is often not noticeable until spring. As the weather cools, the grubs move deep into the soil for the winter.

What to Use, When to Apply

Different Products, Different Timing

If you do decide to treat, the confusion comes with the different products available. Read the label carefully and find the box that lists the active ingredient. Brand names change so check the active ingredient to be sure you are getting what you want. Make only one application of one of these products per year. Here are your choices:

A. Apply May-June – the least toxic option

Chlorantraniliprole is the active ingredient in Scott’s GrubEx™. This is a new mode of action and is virtually non-toxic to mammals and has no effect on bees, and yet it is very effective at controlling grubs. It needs time to become active so make one application in May through June to protect your lawn against the next generation of grubs that will hatch out in August.

B. OR Apply June-July

Imidacloprid is the active ingredient in a couple of products now. It has a low toxicity to mammals but is toxic to bees. Its trade name is Merit and is currently sold as Bayer Advanced Season Long Grub Control™ and Bayer Advanced Complete™

C. OR Apply when you find young grubs

The timing of this option is tricky. Young grubs are hard to see in the soil so you’ll need to look carefully. We encourage homeowners to consider options A or B above at the recommended time so your grass will be protected whenever the grubs hatch.

Option C has two choices:
In August you can use imidacloprid (see option B) but the grubs must be very small, less than 1/2 inch long.
Or you can use trichlorfon, trade name Dylox, and sold as Bayer Advanced 24 Hour Grub Control™. This product is very toxic to mammals and should be used with extreme care. Consider the earlier options, especially if you have children or pets.

Tip

If your lawn is bothered by grubs every year, consider using the least toxic product chlorantraniliprole (Option A) as a preventative.

PESTICIDE DISCLAIMER:

Trade names and brand names of pesticides are used in this bulletin for clarification purposes only. No endorsement of any company is expressed or implied. Every effort has been made to provide correct, complete and up-to-date pesticide recommendations. Nevertheless, changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly; human errors are still possible. These recommendations are not a substitute for pesticide labeling. Please read the label before applying any pesticide and follow the directions exactly.