

CHINCH BUGS

The hairy chinch bug is a common lawn pest that feeds on the crowns and stems of turfgrass causing it to wilt and die. Adult chinch bugs are black with shiny white wing covers and are about 1/8 in (3-3.5 mm) long. The nymphs (young ones) do most of the damage, which is most evident in hot, dry weather in July and August. Damaged lawns become susceptible to weeds and other insects.

Chinch bug damage appears as round, brownish-yellow dead patches, although other factors can cause similar symptoms. When not controlled, large sections of lawns may die particularly on sunny, dry areas near slopes and the edge of lawns. Population size depends on the weather, with only small populations being produced under wet conditions. However, if the weather is hot and dry early in the season with minimal amounts of rainfall, a large population may occur. In exceptionally hot summers there may be a small second generation later in the season.

LIFE CYCLE

The chinch bug life cycle consists of egg, nymph and adult. The adult overwinters in sheltered locations in and around turfgrass. When warmer temperatures occur, the female chinch bugs comes out of hibernation and start feeding. They then mate and begin laying eggs. The microscopic sized eggs hatch into reddish nymphs (smaller than a pinhead) that pass through five growth stages before becoming adults. As they feed they grow and shed their skin four times. The last nymphal stage is almost as big as the adults which are black and can be identified by a white band across the back.

CONTROL

MONITORING

It is easy to confuse improper lawn care with chinch bug damage. Therefore, it is important to monitor your lawn to determine if damage is caused by chinch bugs or lack of moisture and/or over-fertilizing. Begin monitoring for chinch bugs in June before populations reach high numbers. There are several effective monitoring methods to try if you suspect chinch bugs are attacking your lawn. One option is to take a large can, cut both ends off and push it down

into the top layer of the lawn. Pick an area of the lawn where brown-yellow or dead patches of grass meet green healthy grass, as this is where chinch bugs can be found. Fill the can with water and watch for adult chinch bugs to float to the top. You may have to cut a circle in the thatch with a knife if the thatch is really thick. That way the can will fit snugly and the water will not leak out.

Another option involves first drenching the damaged area with soapy water. Then place a white towel over the area and within 15 to 20 minutes chinch bugs will be attaching themselves to the towel to escape the soap. Finally, when large numbers of chinch bugs are present, they can be seen on the surface where the healthy grass meets the damaged sections.

PHYSICAL

A well-fertilized and nutrient-rich area can withstand a chinch bug attack. Thus, good lawn care is the best prevention against chinch bug damage. Understanding chinch bugs, the conditions they favour and their life cycle is very helpful in control. Keep the lawn well fertilized and take caution not to add too much or too little nitrogen. Use proper

mowing techniques which include cutting grass two to four inches high, removing thatch, maintaining proper moisture levels, avoiding water buildup, aerating the lawn if it is compacted and using a resistant variety of grass.

Healthy, chinch-resistant grass with good roots systems, is key to preventing and withstanding chinch bug attack! If you are establishing a new lawn or reseeding an old one, **ALWAYS** ensure that there are at least 6 inches of topsoil. Ask an expert at your neighbourhood Garden Centre to recommend a good variety of grass.

CHEMICAL

Pesticides should only be used as a last resort and when all other methods fail. Choose one that will have the least impact on both you and the environment. Try an insecticidal soap spray on areas where damage has occurred.

If you're not sure what insect, weed or disease you have in your lawn or garden consult an expert.

REMEMBER that some pesticides are more toxic than others. In any case use only a registered domestic class pest control product labeled for chinch bug control. Read and follow carefully directions on the label.



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ADULT



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**...when not
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sections of lawns
particularly
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and at the
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**ADULT CHINCH BUG
ACTUAL SIZE**

