

GRUB CONTROL IN LAWNS

If you plan on using a grub preventative on your lawn, the first half of July is a good target date for most products. Preventatives are normally used on areas that have had a history of grub problems. Traditional grub insecticides such as Dylox or carbaryl (Sevin) are normally applied in late July after grubs are present or as a rescue treatment once damage is seen. Products that contain Merit (imidacloprid) are considered grub preventers. Actually, these products do not prevent grubs, but rather kill grubs when they are quite small, and long before they cause damage. Merit is safer to use around pets and humans than traditional grub killers. Merit can be found in Bayer's Season-Long Grub Control, Grub No-More and Grub Free Zone. Another grub preventer with the trade name GrubEx contains chlorantraniliprole. Though this product is very effective, it is less water soluble than imidacloprid. It should be applied earlier, preferably April or May, but applications through June should still be effective. Remember, all grub products should be watered in soon after application.

Squash Bugs

Squash bugs are the grey, shield-shaped bugs that feed on squash and pumpkin plants. If you have had problems with these insects in the past, you know that they are almost impossible to control when mature. This is because the squash bugs have a hard body that an insecticide has difficulty penetrating. Thus, spraying when the insects are small is important. We are now seeing the nymphs of the first generation. These nymphs will eventually become adults, which will lay eggs that will become the second generation. The second generation can be huge and devastating. Therefore, it is important to control as many squash bugs now as possible. Because squash bugs feed by sucking juice from the plant, only insecticides that directly contact the insect will work. General use insecticides such as permethrin (Bug-B-Gon Multi-Purpose Garden Dust, Green Thumb Multipurpose Garden and Pet Dust, Bug-No-More Yard and Garden Insect Spray, Eight Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Concentrate, Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control, Lawn & Garden Insect Killer), Cyfluthrin, and methoxychlor provide control if a direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs. This means that you **MUST** spray or dust the underside of the leaves because this is where the insects live.

Watering May be Needed This Summer

Many areas of Kansas went through an extremely wet spring. Gardeners may assume that little watering may be needed this summer as the soils were completely recharged. However, many will likely need to do more watering than they expect. Rain saturated soils can damage root systems. Excess water drives oxygen out of the soil as pore spaces are filled with water. Every living cell in a plant must have oxygen to live. If there is no oxygen, roots will die. Therefore, many of our plants may need to be babied through the summer, especially since it has turned so hot so quickly. Newly planted trees are especially vulnerable as they have not established the extensive root system needed to absorb enough water during hot, dry, windy summers. Even trees two or three years old should receive special care even if the root system was not damaged by saturated soils. Deep, infrequent watering and mulching can help trees become established. Newly transplanted trees need at least 10 gallons of water per week, and on sandy soils they will need that much applied twice a week. The secret is getting that water to soak deeply into the soil, so it evaporates more slowly and is available to the tree's roots longer. One way to do this is to drill a small hole (1/8") in the side and near the bottom of a 5-gallon bucket and fill it with water. Let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once, and you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted two to three years ago will require more water. A perforated soaker hose is a great way to water larger trees, a newly established bed or a foundation planting. In sunbaked soil, you may need to rough up the surface with a hoe or tiller to get water to infiltrate easily. It may be helpful to set the kitchen oven timer, so you remember to move the hose or shut off the faucet. If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow. Regardless of method used, soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep. Use a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet. Record the time that was required to reach 12 inches and then use a time clock for any future waterings.

Tomato Leaf-Spot Diseases

This time of year, two common leaf-spot diseases appear on tomato plants. Septoria leaf spot and early blight are both characterized by brown spots on the leaves. Septoria leaf spot usually appears earlier in the season than early blight and produces small dark spots. Spots made by early blight are much larger and often have a distorted “target” pattern of concentric circles. Heavily infected leaves eventually turn yellow and drop. Older leaves are more susceptible than younger ones, so these diseases often start at the bottom of the plant and work up. Mulching, caging, or staking keeps plants off the ground, making them less vulnerable. Better air circulation allows foliage to dry quicker than in plants allowed to sprawl. Mulching also helps prevent water from splashing and carrying disease spores to the plant. In situations where these diseases have been a problem in the past, rotation is a good strategy. It is too late for that now, but keep it in mind for next year. Actually, rotation is a good idea even if you have not had problems in the past. But many gardens are too small to make it practical. If you have room, rotate the location of the tomatoes each year to an area that has not had tomatoes or related crops (peppers, potatoes, eggplant) for several years. If rotation is not feasible, fungicides are often helpful. Be sure to cover both upper and lower leaf surfaces, and reapply fungicide if rainfall removes it. Plants usually become susceptible when the tomato fruit is about the size of a walnut. Chlorothalonil is a good choice for fruiting plants because it has a 0-day waiting period, meaning that fruit can be harvested once the spray is dry. Chlorothalonil can be found in numerous products including Fertilome Broad-Spectrum Landscape and Garden Fungicide, Ortho Garden Disease Control, GardenTech Daconil and others. Be sure to start protecting plants when the disease is first seen. It is virtually impossible to control this disease on heavily infected plants. If chlorothalonil doesn't seem to be effective, try mancozeb (Bonide Mancozeb Flowable). Note that there is a five-day waiting period between application and when the fruit can be harvested. You may wish to pick some tomatoes pink just before you spray if you use Mancozeb as the tomato fruit will ripen inside.