

LATE SUMMER AND FALL GRUB CONTROL

How do you know when you need to treat for grubs to prevent damage to your lawn? Observation is a big key! Do you see inch long, green beetles with copper colored wings feeding in large numbers on your landscape plants during the summer? This is the Japanese beetle, and not only does it feed on leaves of plants while it visited your landscape, but it is also laying eggs in your lawn. Maybe you observed inch long brown beetles flying around trees, shrubs and the eaves of your house at dusk in late June. This is the European Chaffer and though it does not feed at this stage, it does lay eggs into lawns. These eggs soon hatch into small, C-shaped grubs that look like the Japanese Beetle grub. These are the adult stage of the grub.

Before you use insecticides make sure you really have a grub problem. Check areas with browning turf or areas where damage occurred in previous years. During late August through September you can check by cutting into the turf on three sides of a square that is one foot wide. Pull back the turf and count the c-shaped grubs at the root-soil line. These young larvae will feed on roots from August to early November and will continue feeding in spring. If you find more than five grubs per square foot you may need to consider treatment options. Not all grub products work in the same way and some are questionable in their effectiveness.

Preventive products are used the first two weeks in July to coincide with larvae hatching from eggs. Later in the summer as grubs become larger you will need to use curative products that work better on larger grubs. Curative products can also be used in early spring, until mid-March. Watering the lawn after applying either preventive or curative products is essential. It works by moving the material down into the soil, where the grubs are actively feeding. Run a sprinkler for 60 minutes over treated areas or place a bucket in the watering zone and continue watering until there is an inch in the bucket. Products not watered into the turf will breakdown on the surface and will not effectively control the grubs. If you are planning to reseed a turf area that has grubs, be sure to apply an insecticide first to prevent the grubs from eating the grass seed.

A biological product called 'Milky Spore Disease' is listed as a safe control for Japanese beetle. This is a bacterium that causes a natural disease in Japanese beetle grubs.

It is applied three times a year to the turf for two years to build up the level of the bacteria. It does not work well on European chafer. Milky Spore will not work like an insecticide. It will infect a small proportion of grubs in most years, helping to reduce the population level. According to MSU Entomologist Terry Davis, it is only necessary to inoculate the lawn with Milky Spore for two years and it will last for the next 20 years. It is not guaranteed to prevent grub damage to lawns.

Treat all pesticides with respect. Follow label directions for use of gloves, boots and long pants when handling or applying any insecticide. Keep children and pets out of treated area until the chemical has been watered into the turf and has dried.

Ref: MSU Master Gardener Training Manual, Lawns, P. 49, 50. MSU Extension, How to Choose and When to Apply Grub Control Products for Your Lawn.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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