MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

WASHTENAW MASTER GARDENER

SPRING CONTROL OF LAWN GRUBS

Grubs found in Michigan lawns are usually the larva of the Japanese beetle or the European chafer. Grubs can be identified by their C-shaped white bodies. Most people don't know their lawn is infested until patches of turf start to die in August. Animals and birds will feed on the grubs, leaving holes in the lawn. To confirm that the damage is due to grubs, lift a section of the dead turf. It should lift up easily and you should be able to see grubs at the interface between the healthy and dead turf.

Grubs hatch from eggs laid in June. One way to prevent damage is to scout for the beetles at this time. Japanese beetles are green with copper colored wings and are often found feeding on roses, rose-of-sharon, lindens and other plants. European chafers are brown colored beetles that can be found in large numbers at dusk flying around trees, shrubs, and eaves of houses. If you don't see these beetles or only find a few, then it probably is not necessary to treat for grubs. If you do see large numbers of either of these beetles, then the best control measure is to target the grubs as they hatch from eggs rather than waiting until they grow larger and damage turf roots. The best way to do this is to have a healthy, well-watered lawn that can withstand some damage to the roots.

Garden centers have many products claiming to control grubs. These are either preventative or curative products. Curative products include carbaryl or trichlorfon, and are applied from September-November or from March to mid May. It is important to run the sprinkler for an hour to move the product into the soil. It will take about 10-14 days to affect the grubs. These products will not work after mid-May, since the grubs will be done feeding.

Preventative products are most affective and are used to kill the grubs as they hatch. They are best applied during the first 2 weeks of July. These products contain active ingredients such as imidacloprid and halofenozide. Remember that treatment is only needed if large numbers of beetles are spotted in mid to late June.

Do not use products containing only lambda-cyhalothrin, gamma-cyhalothrin, bifenthrin, deltamethrin, cyfluthrin or permethrin for grub control. *Products containing only these ingredients will not work for grub control* because the active ingredient binds with organic material and will not move down to where the grubs are feeding. * (from sources listed below)

Organic products for the control of grubs include beneficial nematodes and milky spore

disease. Nematodes are microscopic worms that parasitize grubs and other insects in the soil. Since they don't survive Michigan winters, they will need to be

re-applied each year. They also require a well-watered lawn. Milky Spore is a disease that attack

Japanese beetles. It must be applied 3 times a year for 2 years to be effective, but will persist in the soil for 20 years after the initial inoculation period. It does not affect European chafer, and won't eliminate the beetle population entirely, but will keep it at low, manageable levels.

NOTE: When using any pesticide, *always* read the label and follow the instructions carefully.

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

https://www.canr.msu.edu/lawn_garden/ https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/