

Grubs in Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Right behind crabgrass I think most homeowners biggest worry is grubs. I don't know how much money local homeowners spend on grub treatments every year, but to be right honest, it's too much! Can grubs be a problem in lawns? Yes they can. I have seen lawns decimated by grubs, I even saw an 80 acre bromegrass hay meadow killed by grubs several years ago. But the number of untreated lawns that I see damaged by grubs is very few. I'm a firm believer that we don't need to be wasting money on grub treatments, or applying all that insecticide to lawns if a problem doesn't exist. We usually have advance notice that a lawn may be developing a grub problem. Unexplained dead spots where you can peel the turf up because roots are gone is an obvious sign. Grass that has died from drought or other causes, still has roots, albeit dead roots, holding it to the soil. Another sign of issues is lots of June beetles or scarabs, the adult form of a grub, on your lawn, lots of holes in the lawn or lots of blackbirds pecking around in the grass. These are all early warning signs of a grub problem. If you don't have these, don't treat. Don't treat it yourself and don't automatically pay for a lawn company to treat for grubs. We have newer products that we can apply anytime in the season with good control. We aren't limited to a few week window in July and early August. So don't get panicky, don't waste money or apply un-needed pesticide treatments, just wait and see! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bermudagrass Issues

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When it comes to Bermudagrass most people probably fall under the 90/10 rule. 90% think it's a weed and 10% think it's a good lawn grass. By the way, Bermudagrass is native to Africa, not Bermuda! I've long held that we are on the northern edge of it's range of adaptation and this became obvious this past winter. I first suspected issues in mid May when it should have been greening up and I could find numerous lawns where there were only a few green sprigs showing up. We had a very strong case of winterkill. It almost got down to -10 last winter but we've had colder temperatures than that and had Bermudagrass survive so what happened this year. Bermudagrass seldom survives when the crown of the plant is exposed to 10 degrees F for any length of time and we often get below that here in winter. However, snow and frozen soil are actually pretty good insulators. When there is good soil moisture, the ground freezes and while it's below freezing, the frozen soil doesn't get terribly cold. What happened this past winter though was drought. Dry soil does not moderate temperature. Our soil was very dry so the single digit and below zero temperatures were able to go much deeper into the soil which then exposed those Bermudagrass crowns to killing temperatures. Where the Bermudagrass was growing and had good soil moisture, it came through the winter just fine. If you hurry you can start to plug Bermuda and get it going again. Call me for details. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Green June Bugs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I first saw their clumsy flight patterns the very end of June and the first calls came in about 2 days later. Green June beetles are out and about and running into everything in sight! Green June beetles are a large green beetle in the scarab beetle family. These are likely as big a beetle as you are going to see in Kansas. They start their life as a grub, a rather large grub. Unlike many grub species that feed on grass roots, the green June beetle grub prefers feeding on old tree roots and tree stumps. These grubs can get as big around as your thumb and as long as your middle finger. They are more likely to be encountered above ground than any other species and actually move around on their back with their legs in the air. While many scarabs are most damaging as a grub, the green June beetle tends to be far more damaging as an adult insect. Green June beetles have a knack for finding ripe fruit about a day before you'd be picking it. In fact, in many parts of the south these rascals are called fig eaters. They can be controlled with standard lawn and garden insecticides like Sevin, malathion and permethrin. But if they are on a fruit tree, make sure the product is labeled for fruit trees. If you want to just knock them down around the yard because, well, they're annoying, then you can do that best with permethrin. BUT, you need to get the spray directly on them to be most effective. Watch their daily patterns and learn where they are at certain times of the day so you can spray them. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Storing Garlic and Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is an unfortunate misconception that all fruits and vegetables store best in the refrigerator. While that is true for some, it sure isn't true for all. It doesn't matter whether you are growing your own or buying at the farmers market, a roadside stand or the grocery store, I'd encourage you to pick up a copy of our bulletin titled Harvest and Storage of Fruits and Vegetables. Two that are often mishandled are onions and garlic. If you grow your own you want to harvest them before they are dead and dry as a gourd. They don't have a lot of foliage but once it starts to brown down it's time to get the bulbs out of the ground and into the shade so they don't get over-heated and sunburned. Once they are out of the ground, tie them together by the tops - 6 to 12 plants in a bundle and then hang them to dry in a sheltered location OR spread them on old window screens. You want them to get well dried down so that there is no moisture left in the neck. Once they are dried you can trim the tops back to about ½ to 1 inch and the roots to 1/4 to ½ inch long. You never want to store onions and especially garlic in the refrigerator. Refrigerator temperatures are the ideal temperature to get garlic to break dormancy and start growing. You're best to just find a cool room temperature location in your house. The other thing you never want to do is put them in a plastic bag. A mesh bag is ideal. If you don't have a mesh bag then a paper bag is the next best thing. Just never in plastic! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Japanese Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A couple of days ago I talked about green June beetles. While these have been around for years, they've become far more common the past decade. Today let's talk about a new green beetle that is relatively new and will be increasing in the years ahead, unfortunately. Japanese beetles arrived in the eastern US decades ago and only recently made it to the Junction City area. Where green June beetles are big, Japanese beetles are 1/3 that size about 1/2 inch long. They are also a scarab beetle. The grub feeds on plant roots and the adult loves foliage, especially foliage of things with sweet smelling flowers like linden trees and rose bushes. Japanese beetles have a metallic green head and copper or brown colored wing covers. Perhaps the most distinctive thing is that along the side of their abdomen they have a series of white dots that really stand out in the sun. Japanese beetles are notorious for swarming together on food sources. They are easily controlled with permethrin and sevin but you want to spray early in the morning to protect bees and other pollinators visiting flowers on the plants the Japanese beetles are feeding on. While you can find Japanese beetle traps for sale I don't recommend them as they use a scent to attract even more Japanese beetles to your yard than might be there normally. If you want an organic control, go out every morning with a small bucket of soapy water and knock the beetles from the plants into the water where they'll drown! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.