

Urban Horticulturer

May 2002

TURF

Chinch bugs - Now is the time to start watching for chinch bugs, particularly on St. Augustinegrass. They like this hot dry weather and often times will show up first along sidewalks and driveways.

As I have previously mentioned, the small nymphs are bright red with a white band across their back. The adults are black and about 1/5 inch long with silvery wings laying flat on their back. Check the turf web site for pictures.



Keep an eye on your lawn and watch for off color areas. The chinch bugs can be found by carefully parting the grass blades at the margin of the yellow area and closely examine the soil surface and base of the turf. Remember that these insects are very quick and move out of sight rapidly.

If you think you see chinch bugs, use the coffee can method to confirm their presence. To do this, cut both ends out of a coffee can and insert one end into the suspicious turf area and fill the can with water. If you can't insert the can into soil because of the thick grass roots, use a knife to cut a ring around the base of the can. Keep the can filled with water for five minutes. Chinch bugs as well as other insects will float to the surface.

If you are not able to identify the floating insects, use an artist's paint brush to pick them out of the water. Place the specimens in a small bottle with rubbing alcohol. Bring or

send the specimens to the Extension Office and I will identify them. You need to keep in mind that there may be other small insects in the grass along with chinch bugs that actually feed on chinch bugs such as big-eyed bugs and earwigs.

Most of you are now aware that Dursban can no longer be used to control chinch bugs on home lawns. So, you will have to choose an alternative product such as diazinon permethrin or Talstar (bifenthrin). To be environmentally friendly, just treat the infested area and out about five feet surrounding the brown spots.

Irrigation - I devoted quite a lot of time last month to proper watering of St. Augustinegrass, so I don't want to belabor the point. However, when I ask audiences if anyone knows how much water their irrigation applies, almost no one raises their hands. I can't overstress the importance, particularly in this hot dry months of May and early June, to know the amount of water your irrigation system applies and also if the coverage is uniform. When you see those dry wilted spots out in the middle of your lawn, it could be caused by chinch bugs, disease, or uneven irrigation. So, identification of the problem is a must. You don't want to be making a pesticide application if uneven watering is the problem.



Place coffee cans or some similar container with straight sides out over your lawn, and run

the system for 15 minutes (do this when it is not windy). Make sure you have a can in the apparent dry spots. Adjust the nozzles if the coverage is not even. Calculate the average water for all the cans (total the amount of inches in all cans and divide that figure by the number of cans), then multiply by four. This gives you the amount of water your irrigation system is putting out per hour. Run your system long enough to put out 3/4 inch of water. Three quarters of an inch of water twice per week should be enough to sustain your lawn. If we go back to once per week watering for turf, St. Augustine lawns are once again going to have trouble.

Diseases - At this time of the year you probably will not have many problems with disease in your turf. As warmer weather and rain approaches, take-all root rot, gray leaf spot, dollar spot and others may become a problem in your St. Augustine lawn. Brown patch is normally a winter disease and is not a problem in the summer.

Fertilization - If you fertilized in March, then there is no need to make another application of a complete fertilizer. You can make an application of a slow release fertilizer such as Milorganite. Over fertilized St. Augustine lawns are very attractive to chinch bugs. If your lawn is turning somewhat yellow, make an application of iron and have the soil pH checked to make sure it is in the proper range for your grass. Both the Polk County Master Gardeners and the University of Florida do pH analyses for a small fee.

Mole crickets - Mid June is the recommended time to treat bahiagrass for mole crickets. If you suspect a mole cricket problem, pour a soap solution (1-2 ounces per gallon water) over the suspected area. If the mole crickets are present, they will surface in a few minutes. Diazinon and bifenthrin (Talstar) can be used for control.

WATER RESTRICTIONS

Most areas of Polk County are allowed to water twice per week (Bartow is once per week). Addresses with an even last number can water on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays and addresses with an odd last number or where no address can be determined can water on Wednesdays and/or Sundays. Hand watering or low volume watering (micro-sprinklers) of ornamentals, flower gardens and vegetable gardens is allowed on any day of the week. Watering should be done before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. You are not allowed to hand water turf any day other than your regular watering days.



I encourage you to use micro-sprinklers and soaker hoses in your plant beds and place plants together that have similar watering requirements. Many plants will need little to no watering after they have become established.

LABEL CANCELLATIONS FOR HOMEOWNER PESTICIDES

Several of the pesticide products that you have been using for years have been or are about to be taken off the market for homeowner use by the Environmental Protection Agency. Most of the products being lost are in a class of insecticides called organo-phosphate insecticides. These products are distant



cousins to the poison gas used in World War II. In high concentrations, they are extremely toxic to people and to insects as well as other wildlife. They are of course more dangerous to children than adults, because the toxicity is related to body weight. Most of the Environmental Protection Agency's concern is the impact on

children in and around the home and to wildlife.

Diazinon will be lost for homeowner use in December 2004. Orthene will also be lost for homeowner use, except for treating homeowner fire ant mounds. Another homeowner product being lost is a product called Cygon (dimethoate), which is used on ornamentals for control of sucking insects, not on turf. Oftenol, a product commonly used to treat mole crickets in bahiagrass will also be removed in the near future.



The EPA will finish evaluating all organo-phosphate insecticides by the end of 2002, and then will start to evaluate carbamate products like Sevin. These products have a different chemistry than organo-phosphate products, but have a similar effect on nervous systems.

Daconil 2787, which is **not** an organo-phosphate insecticide but a fungicide, is no longer registered for use on turf, but still can be used on ornamentals and in vegetable gardens. The reason for this is the exposure to handlers and to children playing in the grass.

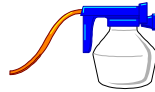
I encourage you to use soaps, either dish soap like Ivory (1 tablespoon per gallon water) or commercial insecticidal soaps like Safer soap. These generally will give good control of aphids and white flies. Horticultural oils offer good protection against many scale insects. Thuricide and Dipel, a biological insecticide, works well for controlling many caterpillars.

The synthetic pyrethroid insecticides including permethrin, cyfluthrin, and bifenthrin are effective against many insects, are quite safe and are available at most garden centers. You will find these common names in the little box at the bottom right of the label. The trade names are too numerous to list. Check the label for insects that they

control.

USING PESTICIDES SAFELY

When you use any type of pesticide product, make sure you protect yourself. First read the label and determine what protection is recommended for that particular product. Sneakers and leather shoes can become soaked with a pesticide. I recommend that you always wear rubber boots, particularly when treating the lawn. They are inexpensive and can be purchased at local discount stores.



Wear some sort of head protection that can be washed or thrown away, as well as long pants and long sleeve shirt. Some garden shops and safety equipment businesses sell light, inexpensive protective suits. Always wear latex gloves when mixing and applying pesticides. The organo-phosphate insecticides immediately penetrate your skin after contact.

Always wear safety glasses that cover the front and sides of your eyes. If you are spraying up into a citrus tree or up into the soffit of your house, the spray drift can come right back in your face with a gust of wind. Mixing chemicals and cleaning pressurized spray cans are also two common ways to spray yourself in the face. Regular glasses or sunglasses do not give your eyes enough protection. Safety glasses are inexpensive, come in clear and tinted plastic and can be purchased at most hardware stores. Finally, wear a respirator if the label so recommends.



MISC. GARDENING FOR MAY

Cuttings - Try starting some azalea and/or camellia cuttings from plants that you have

pruned. Some cuttings (dipped in rooting hormone) will establish when placed in pots in a shady place, if you don't have a mist chamber. However, they must be watered regularly. You can make your own little mist chamber with a 2 liter bottle. Cut the top off and put 3-4 inches of potting medium in the bottom. Punch holes in the bottom to allow for drainage, place a cutting in the medium and replace the lid. Keep in a shady location.

Keep in mind, many common plants will produce roots when placed only in water-coleus, impatiens, bridal veil, ivies and many others. If you are not sure, just give it a try or give me a call.

Citrus - Make your second application of fertilizer to mature citrus trees. Apply 1 pound of 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 citrus fertilizer per year of age up to 8 years. A 6 year old tree would receive 6 pounds of fertilizer spread evenly under the drip line and out a couple of feet. It is O.K. to put mulch under the drip line of the tree to conserve moisture, but keep it 1 foot away from the base.

Azaleas - Be watching for lace bugs. This small, but beautiful insect sucks chlorophyll from the underside of the leaves and makes shiny black fecal deposits which eventually turn brown. The upper side of the leaf has little white stipules where the chlorophyll has been removed. For control, make two applications of an approved insecticide at 10 day intervals.

Keep an eye on your azaleas for wilting in this dry hot weather. If they wilt for more than a couple of days, the leaves may be damaged.

Vegetables - Hopefully you are enjoying some of the vegetables that you planted in March. There are a number of vegetables that can be planted in May including, calabaza, chayote, cherry tomato, collards, malanga, New Zealand spinach, okra, pepper, roselle, Seminole pumpkin, Southern pea, sweet

potato, tamarillo, yam and yard long bean.

Herbs - Anise, basil, bay, laurel, cardamon, chives, coriander, dill, lemon balm, oregano, sage, savory, sweet marjoram, mint, tarragon, and thyme can be planted in May.

Flowers - Angelonia, balsam, begonias, black-eyed Susan, blue daze, browallia, bush daisy, butterfly weed, cat's whiskers, celosia, coleus, coreopsis, crossandra, Dahlberg daisy, gaillardia, gazania, gerbera, goldenrod, gomphrena, impatiens, liatris, marigolds, melampodium, moon vine, nicotiana, nierembergia, pentas, periwinkle, Porter weed, portulaca, purslane, salvia, sunflower, torenia, verbena and zinnias can be planted in May.



Crepe myrtle - Now is the time for powdery mildew (susceptible varieties) and aphids on crepe myrtle. Use soap solution for the aphids and Immunox for the powdery mildew. Buy plants that are resistant to powdery mildew.

Have a good gardening day,

David Shibles
Environmental Horticulturist
Polk County

For gardening information:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://turf.ufl.edu>

For Polk County Extension Information:

<http://polk.ifas.ufl.edu>

NEW PHONE NUMBER: (863) 519-8677