

REDUCING PESTICIDES

it's perfectly natural.



How to Manage Grubs in Your Lawn

Grubs may be our most famous lawn guests. It's very important to determine if damage to your lawn is due to grubs or other factors such as dog spots, poor soil, over-fertilization or disease. Monitoring your lawn carefully and responding correctly is essential to dealing with these pests.

In Toronto, the term "grub" is usually used to refer to the larval (juvenile) stage of one of three beetle species: the June beetle, the European Chafer or the Japanese beetle. The grubs of all these beetles appear as white, C-shaped larva, approximately 2 to 4 cm in length, with tan heads and 6 legs.

Grubs feed on grass roots, which causes patches of grass to wilt and turn brown. As grubs increase in numbers, dead patches can spread across the lawn. Because the roots are destroyed, the grass pulls back easily. Often the first sign of grubs is the secondary damage that results from animals like skunks and raccoons that dig up the lawn looking for food.



A typical grub (shown larger than actual size)
Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Depending upon the type of beetle, grub damage most often occurs in the fall and to a lesser degree in the spring. It's wise to monitor for grubs before damage occurs – this best done in early August. With a sharp knife, carefully cut three sides of a square roughly 30 cm long (approximately 1 square ft), peel back the grass and look for grubs. Repeat this monitoring technique at the outer edge of brown patches should they appear in the fall or spring.

If you think you have a grub problem, contact a licensed lawn care operator or other plant health care expert for additional advice.

A natural lawn and garden care program to increase the health and pest resistance of your lawn should accompany any treatment option. You can repair grub damage by raking the area, applying compost or topsoil and then re-seeding.

The best defence against grubs is healthy grass with long, deep roots. Such a lawn will withstand more grubs without visible damage than an unhealthy lawn. Healthy soil will encourage healthy plants – enrich your soil with organic fertilizers and compost, and follow other techniques outlined in the City's educational material available by phone or online. Nematodes (a biological pest control product) can also help to control most grub species when applied correctly.

Sources:

Toronto Public Health. *Pesticide Free...A Guide to Natural Lawn and Garden Care*. Toronto: City of Toronto. May 2004.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. *Factsheet 97-023. "Grubs in Lawns."*
www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/facts/97-023.htm