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## WATCH FOR FALL ARMYWORM

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Release: Week of September 6

A lawn pest to be on the lookout for is fall armyworm. This is not a frequent pest but once in a while we see large numbers damage lawns. This insect has been causing damage in southern states and moths and egg masses have been found in the Lincoln and Omaha area.

Since there are many types of moths in the landscape and different types of armyworm, it is important to know what fall armyworm looks like and to watch for it in lawns and landscape.

Insecticides should not be applied to lawns unless fall armyworm is positively identified. Avoiding the use of insecticides unless their use is justified helps reduce resistance in insect pests and conserves beneficial insects.

Fall armyworm cannot overwinter in Nebraska and certain weather conditions are needed for it to move north. This is why we only see issues with it once in a while. The first hard freeze will take care of this pest.

If they reach fairly large numbers before then, they can defoliate turf and expose plant crowns (growing points) to dehydration. If grass crowns do not dehydrate and die, damaged turf can recover with irrigation and fertilization.

Armyworms are named because of their habit of moving in masses from field crops to lawns or from lawn to lawn looking for greener pastures. While damaged grasses can turn brown, fall armyworm often moves to greener forage before they completely chew plants to the ground and kill crowns.

To watch for this pest, here is what each life stage looks like. Adult moths have dark gray, mottled forewings with light and dark splotches. The female moth lays tan colored egg masses, each containing 100 to 500 eggs, on leaves of trees and flowers and on hardscape like light posts and patio furniture.

Newly hatched larvae are green in color and move in a looping motion. Young larvae are one-half to three-fourths inches long. Full-grown larvae are one and a half inches long. Larvae are smooth-skinned and vary in color from green to almost black. They have stripes the length of their bodies.

There is more than one type of armyworm and fall armyworm is the one of concern. To help differentiate from other armyworms, look at the head for a predominant white, Y-shape between the eyes, four dark spots at the end of the abdomen, and a stripe the length of the body.

Moths are typically attracted to fields of late-maturing corn to lay their eggs. Larvae feed during the day and can move into turfgrass to cause damage.

Be alert for armyworm moths and look for egg masses. If found, monitor lawns for signs of fall armyworm. If insecticide applications are considered, spray treatments have greater and quicker contact than granular applications. Granular treatments need irrigation or rain to activate the insecticide.

Insecticides that are commonly available and registered for control of fall armyworm in turf include carbaryl (Sevin), cyhalothrin, permethrin, spinosad and Dylox. Professional lawn care services have access to additional materials which may have more persistence than homeowner products.

A lawn pest to be on the lookout for is fall armyworm. This is not a frequent pest but once in a while we see large numbers damage lawns. Fall armyworm has been causing damage in southern states and moths and egg masses have been found in Lincoln and Omaha; so it's a good idea to be watching for armyworm in our area. Insecticides should not be applied unless armyworm is found and identified. The adult is a mottled colored moth. Females lay tan colored egg masses on leaves of trees and flowers and hardscape like light posts. Armyworms are named because of their habit of moving *en masse*. In large numbers, they can defoliate turf, exposing plant crowns to heat and dehydration. Watch for armyworm moths and egg masses. Apply labeled insecticides if the dark colored, striped caterpillars are found in turf. If the growing point or crown of grass plants does not dehydrate, turfgrass can recover with irrigation and fertilization.

While fall is the preferred time for herbicide control of broadleaf weeds like dandelions; it is not a good time to control grassy weeds like crabgrass or nimblewill. Identification of weeds, and knowing if they are annual or perennial, warm season or cool season, is key to knowing when and how to effectively manage them. For dandelions, ground ivy, violets and other perennial broadleaf weeds, spot treat the plants when they are actively growing in September and October. For winter annual broadleaf weeds like henbit, chickweed and speedwell, that grew and bloomed last spring and then died; apply a preemergence herbicide in early September to areas where these weeds were a problem last spring. It is important to identify weeds before controlling them with herbicides to ensure the correct herbicide is used at the right time. Maintaining a dense lawn and using a tall mowing height is also important in weed control in lawns.

Lilacs may be looking a little rough right now. Powdery mildew can coat leaves with a fine white power, and fungal leaf spots can defoliate lilacs by this time of the season. Cercospora leaf spot is a common fungal disease during wet and/or humid years. Although lilac shrubs may look quite bad, loss of leaves this late in the season will not harm otherwise healthy shrubs. As a rule, fungicides do not need to be applied for powdery mildew or foliar leaf spot diseases. Most lilacs are not killed by either disease. If you wish to manage leaf spot disease; during spring just as lilacs are leafing out, and during rainy periods is a key time for fungicide applications. Sanitation will help now. Homeowners should rake and remove fallen leaves from around lilacs. If lilac stems are dying, the issue could be lilac-ash borer or oystershell scale. Control for both of these would be during spring as well; and not this late in the season.

Fall is a great time to plant trees and there are some practices that will enhance growth and others that harm or limit growth. Practices that encourage growth include a loose soil; proper irrigation; using a two to three inch deep layer of organic mulch in a six foot diameter ring around the tree, but not piled against trunk; avoiding pruning the tree at planting; and not planting too deep. The root flare should still be slightly above soil level after planting. To help with this, dig a wide, not deep hole; and never loosen the soil beneath the root ball. Practices or conditions that will limit tree growth include compacted soil; little or no irrigation; grass and weeds growing close to the trunk; planting too deep, and pruning at planting. Things that have little or no effect on tree planting include adding peat or organic matter to backfill soil, fertilizing at planting, or the use of root stimulant products or water absorbing gel crystals.