

Yard and Garden 07-23-2011 Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

We have all heard the old nursery rhyme, *Rub a dub dub, three men in a tub, and who do you think they be? The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker — turn them out, knives all three.*

I have a different version. *Rub a dub dubs, keep an eye out for grubs, white worms shaped like the letter C. The masked chafer, the May/June beetle, and the Japanese beetle — definitely, turf pests all three.*



For the past few weeks, yellowish/brown-colored beetles approximately ½ inch in length and ¼ in width have been emerging from the lawn at night. Attracted to the glow of outdoor lighting, they often appear in great numbers clinging to walls, windows and screens of our homes. It is mating season for *Cyclocephala spp.* more commonly known as the northern masked chafer, or annual white grub. Interestingly,

neither the male nor the female masked chafer beetle feeds on plant material. Their sole purpose is to mate. After mating, the female returns to the surface of our prized bluegrass lawn, digs down four to six inches and lays eleven to fourteen eggs. Approximately two to three weeks later, small larvae emerge. Quickly they move to the surface feeding on grass roots. With voracious appetites, over the next thirty to fifty days, they shed their skins twice becoming what we recognize as fat, white, C-shaped grubs.



I share this information with you as a word of caution. Grubs in great numbers can quickly devastate a beautiful lawn. The first evidence of injury is localized patches of pale, discolored and dying grass displaying symptoms of moisture stress. Keep in mind, one can easily mistake these symptoms for drought or disease, especially now that outdoor temperatures are hovering in the high 90's.

Although I am somewhat embarrassed to admit it, last year my lawn was severely damaged by grubs. When I first noticed pale, discolored, dying grass in late July, I assumed it to be brown patch, one of the many fungal diseases that attacks lawns — a topic for another time. As a result, I did nothing to check for grubs. By mid-to-late August, large patches of grass had died. I could easily lift the dead areas of turf as if they were pieces of unattached carpet. It was then I saw grubs —lots of grubs! I immediately declared curative chemical warfare. I applied the chemical dylox and thoroughly watered it into the soil. A day or two later, the grubs were dead, but so was a big share of my lawn. Last fall, I re-seeded the bare areas. It has taken nearly all of this growing season for those bare areas to be covered again with turf. This year, rather than declaring curative war, I have taken preventive measures.

However, first, consider this. A few grubs in your lawn do not necessarily mean that insecticidal control is needed. Certain threshold levels warrant insecticidal control. Since white grubs do not distribute themselves evenly throughout the turf, random samples need to be taken. Cut a 6-inch-by-6-inch section of turf and peel it back on three sides examining the upper two inches of the root zone. If four or more grubs are detected, chemical treatment may be necessary. Another indicator that your lawn may have grubs is noticing small areas that have been dug up by animals such as raccoons, skunks, or

moles, each foraging for these insects. Flocks of birds, particularly starlings, feeding in the turf provide additional evidence of possible infestation.

Since my lawn was plagued by grubs last year, there is a good chance the problem could reoccur. Knowing this, I have taken preventive measures by applying a chemical called imidacloprid to the lawn. Having watered it in thoroughly with at least one-half inch of water, I am now reasonably assured my lawn is protected. To be on the safe side, I will take random sample checks throughout the remainder of this month and through all of August. I certainly do not want a repeat of last year.

Some **preventive** chemicals for grub control include imidacloprid, clothianidin, or halofenozide. **Curative** products include dylox, sevin, diazinon, triumph. A Neb-guide publication titled *White Grubs in Turf* is available through the following University of Nebraska at Lincoln website.
<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/index.jsp?what=publicationD&publicationId=509>

As lame as my nursery rhyme is, I urge you to pay heed — *Rub a dub dubs, keep an eye out for grubs, white worms shaped like the letter C.*

