

The Landscape Alert

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Fall Armyworms in Turf

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In late summer, almost every year, caterpillars invade turfgrass throughout the state. The damage to established turf is mostly aesthetic, but newly sodded or sprigged areas can be more severely damaged or even killed. While there are several caterpillars that can damage turfgrass, in late summer most of the problems are from [fall armyworms](#). Their favorite turf to feed upon is Bermuda grass.

[Adult armyworm moths](#) are active at night and females lay [eggs in masses](#) of 50 to several hundred. Eggs hatch in a few days, and the young larvae begin to feed on leaf tissue. Damage from small larvae may at first look like skeletonizing, but as the worms grow, the entire leaf is consumed. Armyworms are most active early and late in the day, spending the hotter hours down near the soil in the shade. Larvae feed for 2 to 3 weeks before pupating in the soil. Moths emerge 10 - 14 days later. The entire life cycle from egg to adult moth takes about 28 days in the warm weather of August and September. If there is any doubt about whether worms are present, pouring soapy water on the grass (1/2 oz. dishwashing soap/gallon water) will bring them up very quickly.

Control of armyworms and other turf caterpillars is relatively simple once the problem is identified. The old standby carbaryl (Sevin, etc.) still works well, as do all the pyrethroids. (Pyrethroids are those active ingredients that end in -thrin.) If the worms are detected while they are still small, Bacillus thurengiensis (B.t.) based "biocontrols" like Dipel can provide good control.

Armyworms are most active late in the day and at night, so applications should be made as late as practical for best results. It is not necessary to water after application but an application rate of 20 - 25 gallons of solution per acre as a minimum will ensure good coverage. Do not cut grass for 1 - 3 days after application.

Please share this information with others in the landscape & turf industry. For more information:

Call your local Extension Agent at (800) ASK-UGA1 or locate your local Extension Office at <http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/statewide.cfm>

Armyworms in Pasture and Turf - http://wiki.bugwood.org/Armyworms_in_Pasture_and_Turf

Fall Armyworms - <http://apps.caes.uga.edu/urbanag/Home&Garden/indexFS.cfm?storyid=2576>