

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

CORNELL Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



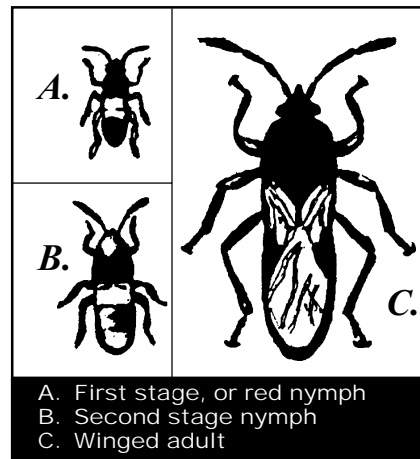
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Chinch Bugs

The hairy chinch bug, *Blissus leucopterus hirtus*, is a serious pest of turfgrass, infesting Kentucky bluegrasses, Fescues, Zoysia, Ryegrasses and Bentgrasses. Fine fescues are the most susceptible.

Identification of Chinch Bugs

Chinch bugs are relatively small insects - ranging from 1/16" to 1/4" at maturity. Adults are black with folded white wings lying flat on their back, while immature chinch bugs are wingless and reddish in color with white bands across their body. Chinch bugs get darker in color as they mature. They often infest areas with south-facing slopes. Fine fescues are the most susceptible.



Determining If Chinch Bugs are Present

Chinch bug injury to turf can usually be distinguished from damage due to dollar spot, dog injury, fertilizer burn, or other conditions by searching among the crowns of the plants at the ground level, around the margins of the injured areas, to determine whether or not chinch bugs are present.

When the bugs are scattered and difficult to find, as in lawn areas where significant injury has not yet appeared, their presence can often

Damage to Turfgrass

Chinch bugs puncture grass blades close to the roots and suck out juices from stems and leaves. Injury is more serious during periods of heat and drought stress in sunny turf areas. In infested areas, turf patches turn a brownish color, surrounded by yellowish margins. High populations of chinch bugs can seriously damage a lawn, killing all of the grass except certain weeds. As the grass dies, the chinch bugs move to areas of live grass. Injury can therefore spread rapidly, involving relatively large areas and should be treated with an appropriate insecticide.

Life Cycle of Chinch Bugs

Chinch bugs overwinter as adults in tall grasses, turf and/or in weeds. Female chinch bugs migrate in the lawn areas in the spring and lay eggs at the base of grass stems. As temperatures increase in late spring, red nymphs (with white bands across their backs) emerge and start sucking grass blades. There are generally two generations of chinch bugs per year in our latitude. Females lay eggs for the second generation in late July or August which mature in late summer to early fall.

be determined by flooding small areas with one ounce of lemon dish soap mixed with a gallon of water, and then covering these areas with a white cloth. Within fifteen or twenty minutes, the insects will crawl up the grass blades and cling to the under surface of the cloth, where they can be easily seen upon turning the cloth over. The presence of chinch bugs can also be determined by cutting out a foot square piece of turf. Turn the turf upside down over a piece of white paper and with your hand scratch the grass roughly so that any insects in the turf will fall onto the white paper. If chinch bugs are present, they can easily be seen on the white paper. Remember all other insects in that turf will be on the paper so you must be able to differentiate chinch bugs from other insects. The best way to get rid of chinch bugs is to overseed damaged areas with endophytic grasses.

If you choose to use a pesticide, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations.

For **Certified Pesticide Operators (CPO)**, information on pesticide use may be found in Cornell Recommends for Turf for current year.

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