

It's June, and the summer pest season has begun in earnest for cool- and warm-season turfgrasses. At this time, two of the three major pests — weeds and diseases — get the most attention. Weeds get noticed because of their visual unsightliness and disruption to the turf surface. Diseases get noticed because — almost for the exact opposite of weeds — although we can't see the pathogens, we know the type of damage they can cause.

Insects combine both characteristics of weeds and diseases. We can see them (they are normally big enough) like weeds, but often go unnoticed until damage occurs, like diseases.

For many golf course superintendents, insect injury on turfgrass occurs once or twice a year depending on the insect's lifecycle. There are exceptions, especially with several southern insect pests. A key to monitoring for potential insect injury is obvious — know the insect pests on your golf courses. This is most likely determined by past experience or use of the previous year's records, such as spray records.

Most superintendents I know have a good grasp of the insect pests on their golf courses and when damage can occur. The mistake I often hear in association with turfgrass injury caused by insects is superintendents saying they forgot (out of sight out of mind?) or overlooked/misdiagnosed potential insect injury. Here's how to combat this: Place a sketch or drawing of the lifecycle of each serious insect pest on your golf course with the damaging stage clearly marked in a place that serves as a frequent reminder. Constant monitoring builds awareness for potential insect injury.

Tools for monitoring the presence of insects are simple and easy to use. The golf course cup cutter is a convenient means for surveying an area for grubs or other soil-inhabiting insects. Samples are taken from the soil, inspected and then replaced to the original hole.

Light traps are effective in monitoring night-flying insects, such as the masked chafer. The professional light traps are comprised of black lights with baffles that deflect or direct

Watch Out for the Turf-Hurting Bugs

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MONITORING BUILDS
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the flying insects into containers. These traps are extremely effective in monitoring night-flying insects.

Simpler light traps can be constructed by placing a water tub under a fixed or suspended light (usually the light should be 3 feet above the water). The night-flying insects are attracted to the light and then fall into the water. Light traps are excellent means for monitoring May-June beetles, masked chafers and black turfgrass ateniens (Niemczyk and Shetlar, 2000).

The most popular pheromone trap is the one sold to capture the Japanese beetle. Pheromones are substances produced by insects to attract themselves to each other. The traps are popular with homeowners who think they can protect their plant material from Japanese beetle feeding. These traps capture only half the Japanese beetles and actually attract more beetles to the site than would normally occur.

Soap flushes are an effective means of monitoring caterpillar insects like cutworm and sod webworm. The soap irritates the insects, and forces them to the surface. A popular and effective soap solution is 2 tablespoons of Joy liquid detergent added to 2 gallons of water, which is then sprinkled over the turfgrass within a yard or meter square area. The soapy solution will also bring mole crickets and beetles to the surface.

Storyteller Garrison Keillor was once quoted as saying, "I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it."

In the case of insects on golf courses, monitoring negates denial.

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