

What's Been Happening in Wisconsin??



By **Dr. R. Chris Williamson**, Turfgrass and Ornamental Entomologist, University of Wisconsin-Madison

When I first accepted my position here at the University of Wisconsin, I was told that there really aren't many turfgrass insect problems in Wisconsin-Madison. Yet, this year, I've continued to receive numerous phone calls in reference to several different turfgrass insect pests. Several people have attributed these problems as a suspicious coincidence to my hiring! Rest assured I did not introduce or bring any insects into Wisconsin. However, the increased occurrence of insects may be best explained by a combination of factors. The past two consecutive winters have been rather "mild," comparatively speaking. Such environmental conditions have allowed a greater number of insects to survive that would normally be controlled naturally. Another biological factor is the "abundance" of moisture. As a whole, most of the state has had adequate water availability for the development and survival of insects. We have not experienced typical drought-type conditions that help contribute to insect control. Consequently, environmental condi-

tions have been especially conducive for insects.

1999 Insect Pests

Most phone calls coming into my office this year have been from golf course superintendents for black cutworms, black turfgrass ataenius (BTA), sod webworms, and Japanese beetles. However, the majority of calls have been in reference to Japanese beetles, both the adults and grubs. Japanese beetles seem to be a "hot topic," especially since adult Japanese beetles are highly visible, quite peculiar in their behavior, and their feeding damage to ornamental plant materials is very noticeable. Most calls about Japanese beetles have been from the southeastern portion of Wisconsin (i.e., Rock, Walworth, Racine, Kenosha, and Milwaukee counties); however, Eau Claire has its share of Japanese beetles as well. Japanese beetle traps were placed every 15 miles from Eau Claire to Madison along interstate I-90/94, and all but one trap (near the central-sands area) caught Japanese beetle adults. This suggests that Japanese beetle populations are con-

tinuing to spread and build up across the state, and they are no longer isolated in "pockets."

Reports of black turfgrass ataenius infestations and damage were also received. Consequently, visits were made to the respective courses, and each situation was assessed. Relatively high (i.e., over

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40 per square foot) numbers of BTA grubs were discovered on golf course putting greens, tees, and fairways. The damage from this turfgrass pest ranged from moderate to severe. At one particular golf course, numerous putting greens were nearly destroyed. Feeding damage from BTA grubs first appears as browning or yellowing areas that look to be "drought-stressed." However, after further or intensive investigation, the turf will pull-back or roll-up like a carpet or rug, and grubs can be located just beneath the turf surface.

Black cutworms and sod webworms continue to pose problems for golf course superintendents also. Currently, we are experiencing outbreaks of the second generation of both black cutworms and sod web-

worms. There are typically about 3 generations per year of black cutworms (i.e., mid-May, early-July, and late-September) and 3-4 generations of sod webworms per year (i.e., June, July, August, and September). However, because no biological system is concise or predictable, it often appears that we have continuous populations of both black cutworms and sod webworms.

Monitoring or sampling insects is an effective approach to management and control. Trapping (both pheromone and black-light traps), soap-flushing (pouring soapy water over the turf), soil sampling, and simple observations can all contribute to effective diagnosis of a pest or potential pest problem. All turf areas should be regularly

inspected for pest problems throughout the growing season. Monitoring and/or sampling allows a turfgrass manager to confirm the presence or absence of an insect pest and to assess the need for making a corrective measure such as the application of an insecticide. ♣

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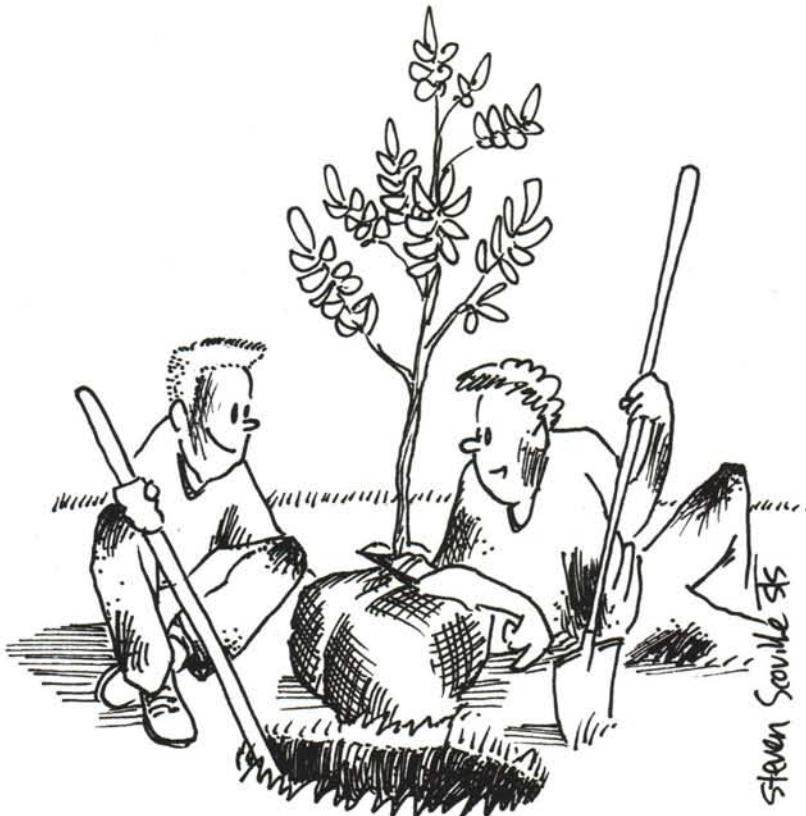
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