Management outline for warm-season insect pests

If we provide conditions that they like, insects will always take advantage.

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Insects are opportunistic creatures with an amazing ability to take advantage of what we set in front of them. Provide them with an adequate source of food in an appropriate environment and they will find it.

Here are the some of the common insect pests of warm-season turf:

CUTWORMS, ARMYWORMS

Hosts: all warm-season grasses
Field Diagnosis: Clip turf off at soil level. Severe infestations may leave large bare areas where turf has been consumed.
Control Practices:
▶ use "soap flush" to detect
▶ treat late in day
▶ do not mow and remove clippings for 1-3 days
▶ may be present from early spring to late fall

FIRE ANTS

Hosts: all warm-season grasses
Field Diagnosis: Ants create unsightly mounds which may also damage mowing equipment. Painful stings of concern in high traffic areas.
Control Practices:
▶ best controlled in spring and fall when workers are actively foraging for food.
▶ mound treatments generally most effective, but are labor-intensive
▶ controls must be continued once program is started (fire ants will return at higher levels if treatments are stopped)
▶ do not disturb mounds during treatment
▶ use baits prior to contact insecticides to allow workers to return baits to mound

MOLE CRICKETS

Hosts: prefers bahiagrass and close-cut bermudagrass
Field Diagnosis: Extensive tunneling is unsightly. Root feeding causes dieback, thin spots.
Control Practices:
▶ use "soap flush" to detect
▶ treat in June/July as soon as egg hatch
▶ follow-up treatments usually necessary
▶ look for adult activity in March/April to define areas of high risk for egg hatch

GROUND PEARLS

Hosts: most commonly attacks bermudagrass and centipedegrass
Field Diagnosis: Yellowing and then complete dieback of turf with no new regrowth the following season
Control Practices:
▶ no known effective control measure
▶ practice good turf management to increase turf tolerance
▶ irrigate during dry weather

SOUTHERN CHINCH BUGS

Hosts: all warm-season grasses, prefers St. Augustinegrass
Field Diagnosis: Feeding results in turf becoming yellow and eventually turning reddish-brown.
Control Practices:
▶ avoid over-fertilizing
▶ manage thatch
▶ irrigate during dry spells
▶ apply pesticides with plenty of water
▶ multiple treatments often necessary

TWOLINED SPITTLEBUGS

Hosts: all warm-season grasses
Field Diagnosis: Results in yellowing of infested turf and severe infestation have noticeable unsightly "spittle masses."
Control Practices:
▶ control adults on ornamentals like hollies
▶ treat on cloudy days when possible, since spittlebugs are higher up on turf
▶ begin monitoring in early summer

WHITE GRUBS

Hosts: all warm-season grasses
Field Diagnosis: Grubs feed on roots and cause drought stress and turf dieback. Grubs may attract moles and skunks which like to eat them.
Control Practices:
▶ attracted to low-cut, highly-maintained turf
▶ dig squares of sod 4-6" deep in late August to detect small grubs
▶ treatments most effective in late August/early September
▶ avoid ornamentals attractive to adult stages of Japanese beetles or green June beetles

BERMUDAGRASS MITES

Hosts: only bermudagrass
Field Diagnosis: Initial yellowing of leaftips, followed by shortening of internodes causing a tufted growth. May die under severe infestations.
Control Practices:
▶ irrigate during dry spells
▶ proper fertilization helps turf outgrow damage
▶ Resistant cultivars Floratex, Midiron and Tifdwarf
▶ multiple treatments often necessary

BEES/WASPS

Hosts: all turf types
Field Diagnosis: Holes, mounds, tunneling in turf area. Insects flying over turf area.
Control Practices:
▶ maintain a healthy, lush stand of turf. Most bees and wasps that live in the soil prefer a thin stand of turf
▶ mulch areas under shrubs, trees, etc. and keep mulch fresh to discourage nesting. **LM**