



How to Get Rid of Chinch Bugs

By DoMyOwn staff

How to get rid of chinch bugs, Chinch Bug Identification

Chinch bugs are common throughout the Gulf States and into Georgia and North Carolina, but they may also be found anywhere St. Augustine grass is grown. While Chinch bugs most commonly infest St. Augustine grass they may occasionally be found to infest centipede grass, zoysia grass, bahia grass, torpedo grass, pangola grass, and occasionally Bermuda grass.

Description

Adult Chinch bugs are 1/8" to 1/10" long (about the size of a grain of rice), with white wings that are folded flat on the back with a triangular-shaped black marking in the middle of the outer edge of each wing. Adults may have long or short wings, and populations often contain both. Their bodies are black. Immature or young chinch bugs are reddish-orange with a white band across the back and darken in color as they mature finally turning black before becoming adults.

Life Cycle

Adult chinch bugs may live up to 2 months. Females lay 4 or 5 eggs a day or 250-300 eggs in a lifetime. Tiny eggs can be laid one at a time or a few at a time in leaf sheaths, soft soil, or other protected areas. The eggs are white when first laid and turn bright orange or red just before hatching. Eggs hatch within 6-13 days (average: 10 days)

Chinch bugs overwinter as eggs and become active in the spring. There may be between 3-5 generations per year in infested areas. Southern Florida may see year round activity and more chinch bug generations per year because of the constant warm climate.

Damage

Chinch bugs cause damage to lawns because of the way they feed. They pierce plant tissue with beak like mouth parts and suck away the plant juice and leave behind their saliva which has phytotoxic effects. This type of feeding causes yellow discolored spots in the lawn that usually turn brown. As the grass dies, the chinch bugs move to the periphery of the dead spots to feed, causing the dead areas to gradually enlarge. Chinch bug damage is usually at its worst during hot, dry times of year and in sunny areas rather than in shady areas.

Detection

The approximate point at which damage is first noticed is 20-25 chinch bugs per square foot. There are a couple of methods that you may use to accurately monitor a suspected chinch bug infestation.

Plastic Bag Method

1. Place a large square of turf in a clear zip top bag (you need not dig very deep as chinch bugs are found in the thatch layer or just below the surface of the soil)
2. Seal bag and place it in the sun
3. After several minutes the bag will heat up and insects will leave the turf sample and collect on the inside of the bag
4. Count the number of chinch bugs
5. Sample several areas (damaged, not dead areas) around the affected region.

Flotation Method

1. Remove both ends from a 6 inch diameter coffee can
2. Force one end of coffee can into suspected area (edge of affected or discolored turf)
3. Continuously fill can with water for ten minutes
4. Examine insects floating on the waters surface
5. If there are more than 4-5 chinch bugs treatment is needed.

Treatment

Chinch bugs can be one of the most difficult insect pests to control in grasses. It is recommended that insecticides be used at the highest application rates on the product label to achieve [chinch bug control](#) for both nymphs and adults. Chinch bugs infest the base of grass plants and are often found in the thatch layer (dead plant material at the base of the plant).

DoMyOwnPestControl.com recommends [Talstar Granules](#) for chinch bug control. Talstar is the leader when it comes to chinch bug infestations. This product is applied using a [hand spreader](#) followed by irrigating the treated area with up to 0.25 inches of water immediately after application to activate (release from the granule) the insecticide. (Please read the label instructions on insecticides before use)

