

# Billbug Control

## Billbug Injury in Lawn



### Plant Damage

Billbug larvae are the damaging life stage. The greatest injury to turfgrass usually appears from mid-June through late July, although billbugs can be feeding all summer. Turfgrass will look drought stressed with small brown patches appearing. Blades of grass can easily be pulled away from the crown with billbug infestations.

### What You Should Know

- Billbugs are weevils or snout beetles that rarely fly.
- Billbugs eat turfgrass roots just below the thatch layer.
- Heavy billbug infestations can kill grass, with peak turfgrass injury occurring in mid to late summer.
- Early billbug detection is important for the prevention of widespread turfgrass damage.
- Keeping turfgrass properly irrigated and fertilized will minimize potential billbug damage.
- Billbug damage is often misdiagnosed, and confused with drought stress or fungal disease.

## Control Options

In certain situations where billbugs are consistently damaging over multiple years, a more aggressive control program can be initiated. Chemical control should be considered when cultural methods are not effective. Consider using systemic insecticides, like imidacloprid [Grub Free Zone II] for billbug control because of its long residual. Here are some guidelines for effective chemical control in turfgrass:

- If the thatch layer exceeds ½", use a light aerification to enhance soil penetration.
- Apply ½" of water 48 hours before chemical application to bring larvae closer to the soil surface.
- Mow the lawn to about 1½" to improve penetration.
- Immediately apply ½ - ¾" of water after application to push the chemical down to the root zone.
- Repeat irrigation every four or five days to continue chemical movement in the soil.



## Cultural Control

- Consider endophyte-infected perennial ryegrasses and fescues that are well adapted to our climate.
- Overly maintained turfgrass can be an attractive place for adult females to lay eggs; keep plants healthy, but be careful not to exceed recommended fertilization and irrigation schedules.
- Scout for adults moving to turfgrass in the early spring and start monitoring for larvae in the summer by taking soil samples.

Revised 5/14/16

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