



Topic: Chinch Bug

Question: Last night a large straight rectangular section of my lawn turned brown with no sign of life. I have not done anything to the lawn in over a month and a half. Then I applied a weed and feed fertilizer to the entire lawn. I used a broadcast spreader that should not have caused the rectangular section. The rest of the lawn is fine. What can you tell me?

- John, Email

Answer: The problem is probably the southern chinch bug, *Blissus insularis*. The insect feeds on St. Augustine grass and is active year-round in South Florida. During the year, the damage is usually first noticed in May or June. Our warm Winter and excessively dry Spring may have exacerbated the problem. Damage often occurs as broad strips, in the open, near sidewalks and driveways, but also in the middle of the lawns. Infested grass has slower growth, turns yellow, then reddish-brown, and dies. This can be a tough insect to control. Over the years it has become resistance to a plethora of insecticides. Ideally, where cinch bug has been a problem, chemical control should begin in March but can be applied now. Over-irrigation and fertilization can lead to a lawn with heavy thatch and be the source of the problem. Follow the label directions on the packet of any chemicals used for its control.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml>. For native plants click on Publications A-Z.

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