

Chinch Bugs in Zoysia Lawns



It is not uncommon to come across 30+ year-old zoysia lawns in St. Louis. They are resilient and require comparatively little care. That's why many homeowners are caught off guard by large areas that rapidly turn brown and die out in a matter of weeks. It is unclear why lawns without a history of chinch bug damage suddenly become infested.

What is going on?

Chinch bugs begin feeding and reproducing in April and May when temperatures reach 70° F. They inject a chemical as they feed that blocks water flow, making grass appear very dry even if moisture has been abundant. Yellow or brown patches begin small but expand rapidly as chinch bug populations increase in June, July and August. The initial patches often become craters filling up with various lawn weeds. Hot, sunny areas are often worse than those in any amount of shade.



St. Louis zoysia lawn infested with chinch bugs on July 10th. The damage had begun much earlier in the year. Insects are more likely to be found in circled area.

How can I tell if I have them?

Chinch bugs are as long as the lead at the end of a pencil and they move quickly. Adults have white wings with black markings. Juveniles are smaller and reddish. Inspect areas at the border between green and brown grass. (see above) They are most active during the hotter part of the day. Remove the bottom of a metal coffee can, push it into the ground and fill it with water. Chinch bugs will quickly float to the top. If zoysia has rapidly dying patches and chinch bugs are present, treatment is called for.

If chinch bugs are not found, the cause may be an insect called the hunting billbug. Contact a reputable lawn care company for diagnosis and treatment of either insect. If you plan to treat chinch bugs on your own, products with the following active ingredients have proved effective: bifenthrin, lambda-cyhalothrin and carbaryl. Look for these names on the bottom of the label. Mow and collect the clippings before you make the application and follow all label directions.

juvenile



adult chinch bug

