

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
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Nassau County



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Sod Webworms

Sod webworm is another pest of turfgrasses in this area. The culprit that damages turf is the caterpillar or immature stage, which is 1/4"-3/4" long, light brown, and may be spotted. The adult of the sod webworm is a moth about 1/2"-3/4" long. It is whitish-gray to brown and is seen most often in late summer and early fall.

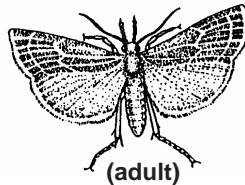


(larvae)

Life cycle of sod webworm

The adult moths do not damage the turf - they simply lay eggs as they fly over the area. They fly at night and stay in shrubbery and tall grasses during the day. The eggs take 7-10 days to hatch. The caterpillar type larva feeds on grass blades. Feeding occurs during the evening or nighttime hours. The sod webworm lives in silken weblike tunnels in the ground that are usually lined with greenish droppings. The caterpillars overwinter in these tunnels and become active in the spring.

They are fully grown by June, pupate in the tunnels and in late June-July emerge as adults. The moths have a rather quick, jerky, zig-zag flight pattern.



(adult)

Damage caused by sod webworm

Infestations of sod webworm cause turf to die in irregular patches that coalesce and result in the death of large areas which can look like disease or drought but do not respond to water. Damage is most often seen late in summer as conditions become hot and dry. Sod webworm larvae are most often seen. When they are closely examined, you should see the silken weblike tunnels containing some green droppings, if sod webworm is the culprit.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. *insecticide*, *fungicide*, *herbicide*, etc.

Cultural management

Whenever you are in the market to purchase lawn seed, consider buying a variety or mix that contains endophyte-containing cultivars. Sod webworm injury to these grasses will be greatly reduced and so will your need for insecticides. Endophytes are "good guy" fungi that cause the grass to be less desirable as a food source by these insects. Check seed packages to see if the word(s) "endophyte" or "endophytically enhanced" appears on it.

If you choose to use a pesticide, please contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations.

For Certified Pesticide Operators (CPO), information on pesticide use can be found in the Cornell Recommendations for Turf for the current year.

WHENEVER YOU USE A PESTICIDE,
ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW
THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

"This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office (516) 444-0340. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell Cooperative Extension and its employees assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsement of products is made or implied."

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