



Banishing Pesky Pests to Create a Lush Lawn

If a once-healthy lawn no longer seems to have the dense, lush surface it had (or perhaps dense and lush are two words that have never been associated with that specific lawn), now is the time to identify the cause of the problem. A lawn must be hardy to survive weed, insect and disease attacks.

“A lawn is the focal point of recreational activity and aesthetic beauty of a property. Carefully and frequently analyzing a lawn for pests (weeds, diseases and insects) will help to identify problems before a threshold of damage occurs. Correcting the problems will ensure a healthy lawn, save money on costly repairs and enhance the quality and appearance of a lawn,” says John Gibson, director of operations for Swingle Tree, Lawn & Christmas Decor, Denver, Colo.

Gibson is president-elect of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), an organization that represents professional exterior and interior landscape maintenance, installation, design/build, and lawn care contracting firms and suppliers that is also a member of Project EverGreen.

Recently, green industry associations and companies have come together to form Project EverGreen to raise the awareness of the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of landscapes and promote the significance of those who preserve and enhance green spaces at home, work and play. For more information about Project EverGreen, visit www.projectevergreen.com.

“Pesticides” is the generic term for the insecticides, herbicides and fungicides meant to eliminate or control weeds, non-beneficial insects, fungus and other diseases. Pesticides may be either synthetic or organic and are used to control a pest - be

it a weed, insect or disease - problem that has become out of control.

“It is usually a good idea to look closer at your lawn to catch potential pest problems before they become too difficult to manage,” says Parwinder Grewal, Ph.D., The Ohio State University associate professor of entomology, nematology and environment science. “For example, it is too late for grub control when skunks have started digging the turf in search of a nice meal of fully developed, juicy grub larvae.”

The first step is to identify the pest and the conditions that led to the pest infestation. After making sure the pest population is at a level that would cause unacceptable damage to the lawn, pesticides may be part of the treatment plan. If you choose to use one, keep these tips in mind:

- Always read and follow label directions.
- Do not apply pesticides on windy days, as they may drift beyond the application area.
- Spot-treat for weed and insect infestations whenever possible.
- Do not apply a pesticide in or near a water source, and keep it off pavement or impervious surfaces that could be washed into water bodies.
- Stay out of treated areas until the spray has dried, dust has settled, or as directed on the product label.

Remember, not all insects are pests. Less than five percent of all insects are harmful, and most of these have natural predators such as other insects, birds, bats and toads to keep them in check.

Robust lawns are more resistant to pest attacks than lawns under stress. Correcting



soil pH, proper fertilization and other management practices that encourage healthy lawn growth are all part of creating a beautiful lawn year after year.

While some homeowners prefer applying lawn care products to control or eliminate pests themselves, others might feel more comfortable hiring a professional to apply the products. Regardless, environmental stewardship should be a top priority when managing and maintaining lawns and landscapes.