



Chinch bugs

Blissus species
Order Hemiptera, Family Lygaeidae; Seed bugs
Native pests

Pest information: Turf grasses, blade sucking nymphs and adults.

Description: Chinch bugs on turf are not common. Obtain positive identification before attempting control. Immature bugs are red, but become dark as they mature. Adults are 5 mm long, have a head that is narrower than the thorax (shoulder), and have light colored forewings with a conspicuous black triangle midway along the outside margin. Immature chinch bugs (nymphs) are similar in appearance to adults except smaller with the wings absent or only moderately developed.

Life history: Dry conditions encourage chinch bug populations. A fungal disease destroys populations during a wet weather. There is one generation a year in the Midwest; two generations in New Jersey.

Overwintering: Adults in debris.

Damage symptoms: Chinch bugs suck the sap from blades and the damage appears as pale areas, often with yellow streaking and chlorotic brown spots, since the chinch bug injects a toxin while feeding.

Monitoring: Chinch bug populations of 20 to 25/sq. ft. can cause damage and may warrant treatment.

Cultural control: Maintain healthy grass by fertilizing in the spring and fall and watering during periods of drought.

Chemical control: Overwintering adults can be reduced from April to May for season-long control. Spring generation nymphs can be treated in mid June. Summer generation nymphs can be treated in mid to late August. Plant resistant turfgrasses, especially perennial ryegrass or tall fescue containing endophytes, reduce use of fine red fescue in sunny areas, and reduce thatch. Treat at first signs of damage. Use a soap flush to detect nymphs and adults. Do not use broad spectrum insecticides routinely, as they will do more harm than good and will kill the beneficial insects that live in the turf, which can cause pest outbreaks.

Biological control: Bigeyed bugs, ants, spiders, carabid ground beetles, staphylinid beetles

Plant mortality risk: Low

Biorational pesticides: *Beauveria bassiana*, nematodes (*Heterorhabditis bacteriophora*, *Steinernema carpocapsae*)

Conventional pesticides: acephate, beta-cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, imidacloprid (suppression only), lambda-cyhalothrin, permethrin



True hairy chinch bug adult; notice the black triangle on the wings. (274)

Photo: Mark Ascerno