Forsyth Field Notes

September 2021

Forsyth County Cooperative Extension News

In this Issue

Fall Army Worms

By Dr. Will Hudson and Dr. Clint Waltz
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Fall armyworms cause crop and turfgrass damaged each year. Photo by Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.

This has been a problematic year for armyworms in turfgrass. The fall armyworm is the caterpillar of a moth that returns to Georgia almost every year. Although the moths don't survive winters, they travel north from Florida on weather fronts every spring and summer, laying eggs as they go. After several generations, the moths – and their offspring, armyworms – arrive in North Georgia in late summer or early fall.

The moth lays eggs in batches of a few dozen to several hundred, allowing populations to grow rapidly throughout the summer. Eggs hatch after a few days and the caterpillars feed and grow for 2-3 weeks before pupating. A week or so later, a new adult moth emerges, and the cycle starts again. In warm weather, the cycle takes about 4 weeks to complete.

Insecticidal control of caterpillars in turf and sod is not complicated. There are several products that are effective and relatively inexpensive; others are more expensive but offer better control of larger worms. A few products give long-term protection at a premium price. All insecticides are more effective on small worms than on mature "snakes" that are nearly ready to pupate. Pyrethroid insecticides (active ingredients that end in *–thrin*) are contact insecticides that also kill by ingestion if caterpillars feed on treated grass. They are off patent, so there are inexpensive and effective product options for controlling small to medium size worms. Residual activity fades after a few days in the summer environment and after mowing the lawn.

Products containing spinosad are more costly but are effective and provide longer control. However, they do not move in the plant, so they do not protect new growth. The "gold standard" is chlorotraniliprole, sold as Acelepryn and in some combination

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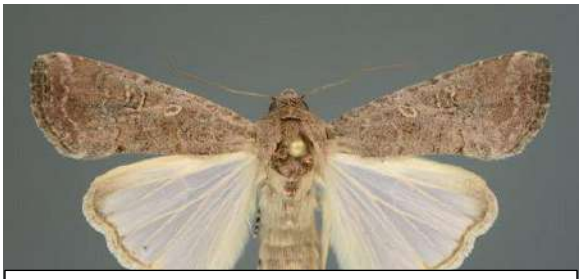
products. This material is systemic in the plant and provides a dose-dependent residual activity.

Insect growth regulators (IGR), such as Confirm and Dimilin, provide a different approach to insect control. Confirm is active only on caterpillars. Dimilin is a broad-spectrum IGR that stops development of immature insects so they cannot grow into adults. It is absorbed into the grass and remains active, but does not move into new growth. Some sod producers have begun treating sod with Dimilin before harvest as a preventative to keep any small worms from developing. It is not harmful to animals or people.



Female *Spodoptera frugiperda* moths move north from Florida every summer, laying armyworm eggs. Photo by Lyle J. Buss, University of Florida.

Armyworm moths are continuously flying and are attracted to young succulent grass, so infestations of newly sodded lawns are common for 30-60 days after establishment. The practices associated with establishment, like irrigation and nitrogen fertility, promote growth characterized by succulent leaves.

If armyworms are identified and controlled early, turfgrass recovery can be expected without needing to replace the sod. For insecticide application rates and directions, read the product label or see the Home Turfgrass Insect Control section of the 2021 Georgia Pest Management Handbook. As fall approaches, the armyworm life cycle typically lengthens, changing developmental timing as temperatures cool. Similarly, shorter days and cooler temperatures slow turfgrass growth.

An Invasive Issue

By Shannon Kennedy
Agriculture & Natural Resources Educator
UGA Extension Forsyth County

Eradication efforts are helping win the war against invasive kudzu, the plant that ate the south. Photo courtesy of University of Georgia.

We're all familiar with the vista that kudzu creates: a blanket of green consuming trees, fields, and buildings. Similarly, the sight of dense thickets of Chinese privet that squeeze out any other type of undergrowth is common in forests, parks, and neighborhoods. These are poster children for non-native invasive species in the Southeast, but they're not the only invasive threats we face. To reduce the impact of non-native invasive plants, we need to know what they are, how to identify them, and what control methods to use.

The vocabulary surrounding invasive species can be confusing. An invasive species is a plant, insect, or animal that causes harm to people, the economy, or the environment. Note that this definition does not address the region the invasive plant originated from. A plant can be a native species and be invasive if it spreads

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prolifically somewhere it is not wanted. However, usually when people discuss "invasive species," they usually mean a non-native, introduced species; something that is not from our area and causes environmental or economic damage.

Non-native privet has overtaken 644,000 acres of Georgia forest lands. Photo courtesy of University of Georgia.

Non-native plants become invasive because they have advantage over native plants for living in our environment. Some invasive plants have an extended growing season, some produce hundreds of thousands of seeds, and others simply grow faster than other plants. Many of these plants thrive in disturbed habitat, so developing areas and tilled fields provide opportunities for these organisms to become established. They rapidly spread, overtaking any other plants that may be trying to grow, reducing biodiversity, and possibly threatening human, livestock, or crop health.

Since different species cause different types of damage, it can be hard to decide which species is the worst. Do you classify them by their prevalence? Is a poisonous plant worse than a vine that carries a crop disease? In 2019 the Forestry Commission released the "dirty dozen" invasive plant list based on the acres of land covered. From lowest to highest ranking, those species are: Chinese wisteria, trifoliate orange, mimosa, English ivy, non-native olives, Japanese climbing fern, Chinese tallowtree, kudzu, non-native lespedeza, chinaberry, Japanese stiltgrass, and taking first place: Chinese privet. In addition to this, Forsyth County has its fair share of Japanese honeysuckle, golden bamboo, and princesstrees.

So, what can we do about these invasive plants? Since Georgia law does not restrict the sale of potentially invasive plants, plant retailers market English ivy, Bradford pears, periwinkles, and nandina. By finding a substitute, possibly native, plant to use, we can avoid spreading invasive plants from our landscapes. Check out the blooming and fruiting selections in the Forsyth County Extension Fall Plant Sale.

The next step is to become familiar with non-native invasives so we can remove them if they are in our landscape. Some plants, like young Japanese stiltgrass (also known as Nepalese browntop) are easy to pull up. Hand weeding these annual plants before they mature enough to produce seeds is very effective in reducing their numbers in the current and subsequent years. Other invasive plants have woody stems and waxy leaves, so pulling and spraying herbicides does not work well. For woodier plants, it's usually more effective to cut the stem of the plant and immediately apply a stump herbicide so the chemical can travel into the root system. This prevents resprouting or growth.

One excellent resource for learning about invasive species in Georgia is Invasive.org. The website has profiles of all invasive organisms as well as news surrounding invasive species issues. For a more active role, download the EDDMapS app. This invasive species tracking effort is supported by the University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, and it is a place where concerned people can

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report the location of invasive species. The data helps researchers track the abundance and spread of different invasive species.

Invasive plants are a widespread problem that require a team effort, such as the Cogongrass Eradication Team, to resolve. Since 2004, landowners have worked in concert with the Georgia Forestry Commission to scout, report, and take action to eradicate this plant. Locally, the Forsyth County Commission recently approved an ordinance amendment to allow communities and landowners to work with the county arborist to control and eradicate invasive plants in buffer zones.

Tackling Mold In Your Home

By Candace Tucker
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
UGA Extension Coweta County

Mold can grow inside homes when moisture meets organic matter.

On average, people spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors, where the concentrations of some pollutants are often 2 to 5 times higher than typical outdoor concentrations. Mold is just one of those pollutants that can contribute to poor indoor air quality. Molds are nature's recycler, so they are everywhere, and there are hundreds of species. Mold is in the air and on many different surfaces. It only becomes a problem for us when colonies grow in places like our homes.

Mold needs two conditions to grow – moisture and organic matter. Our homes are full of organic matter. Therefore, the only condition that we can reasonably control is moisture. Not all mold is toxic, but in certain conditions, some types of mold can produce toxins called mycotoxins.

Black mold gets a lot of attention and is often labeled as toxic. However, just because the mold in your house looks black, it does not mean you have a toxigenic mold. A good rule of thumb is to treat all molds the same with respect to potential health risks and removal.

You can often smell mold before you see it. If your home has a musty or mildew smell, start looking for the mold. It often grows in the bathroom, kitchen, laundry room, basement, or crawl space. If the moldy area is less than about 10 square feet, in most cases, you can handle the clean-up job yourself. If you have an extensive amount of mold, you may want to contact an experienced mold clean-up professional.

Always remember that the key to mold control is moisture control. If there is mold growth in your home, you must clean-up the mold and fix the water/moisture problem. If you clean-up the mold but do not fix the water/moisture problem, most likely, the mold problem will come back. This is done in a variety of ways, but the most important measures you can take to prevent excess moisture from getting in your home to keep ventilated, properly maintained, and to repair any leaks.

For more information on mold prevention and remediation, visit these websites:

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - cdc.gov/mold
- Environmental Protection Agency - epa.gov/mold
- Indoor Air Quality Association - iaqa.org
- Institute of Inspection Cleaning & Restoration Certification - iicrc.org
- Restoration Industry Association - restorationindustry.org
- UGA Extension - fcs.uga.edu/extension/mold-safety

Lawn & Landscape Do's and Don'ts for Fall

By Heather Kolich
Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent
UGA Extension Forsyth County

As the weather transitions into fall, there are some things we should – and shouldn't do – to help our lawns and landscape plants survive the winter and reemerge for a healthy spring green-up.

DO: Apply preemergence herbicide to lawns in early to mid-September to prevent winter annual weeds. The good thing about annual weeds is they only reproduce by seed. Another good thing about annual weeds is that timely applications of preemergence herbicides in September and February can prevent many annual weed seeds from becoming plants. The following granular preemergence herbicides control annual grasses and certain broadleaf weeds and are safe to use on established bermudagrass and tall fescue lawns:

- Benefin
- Benefin + oryzalin
- Benefin + trifluralin
- Dithiopyr
- Pendimethalin

These active ingredients are available in products under a variety of trade names. Read the label for the list of active ingredients and application directions.

DO: Clean up fallen leaves and blossoms around landscape plants. Discard leaves of plants that had fungus or other disease problems so they can't serve to reinfect the plant with spring rains. Sanitation is a key tool in disease prevention.

DO: Plant woody perennials. Fall planting allows root systems to acclimate and grow into their new environments without the stress of supporting leaf and flower growth under summer heat. Establishing strong roots is essential for long-lived, thriving plants. Not sure what to plant? Check out our fall plant sale, with native perennial fruits like blueberries and dwarf red mulberry trees, and pollinator-friendly native ornamentals like American beautyberry and pink muhly grass. Visit https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/forsyth.html and click on the Fall Plant Sale picture. Order plants now and pick them up at the Extension office on October 23.

DO: Start a compost pile. Instead of bagging or burning fall leaves, compost them into a rich, free soil amendment. A simple compost pile consists of two parts brown material (fall leaves) and one part green material (vegetable scraps and fruit peels), plus oxygen and enough water to keep the pile uniformly moist. Turn the pile every 2-3 weeks and add water as needed. Composting microbes work more slowly during the winter, the finished product should be ready by spring.

DON'T: Fertilize bermudagrass or other plants winding down for winter dormancy. Fertilizing plants stimulates growth, disrupting the transition to dormancy and producing tender new growth that could be damaged with the first frost. Applying nitrogen to bermudagrass in the fall also sets the stage for diseases problems in the spring.

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DON'T: Prune. Like fertilizer, pruning stimulates plants to grow and produce new buds – not what they need when they are supposed to be cycling down for winter.

DO: Take a class with Extension. We're partnering with Cumming Library for two evening classes in September: Planning Your Pruning and Improving Your Soil. See below for details.

Upcoming Extension Programs

September Gardening Programs

Join Forsyth County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources experts for two free evening classes at Forsyth County Public Libraries Cumming Branch. Register at https://www.forsythpl.org/

Improving Your Soil, September 8.
Soil is the foundation of garden success; unfortunately, we can neglect or damage it through routine activities. Come learn the basic dynamics of soil and what you can do to build healthy soil for plant success.

Planning Your Pruning, September 15.
Pruning is part art, part science, and part stress. Join ANR Agent Heather Kolich to learn how plants respond to pruning, why it's important for plant health, and how to plan your pruning for successful outcomes.

October Gardening Programs

The Deadly Garden, October 14, 7-8:30 p.m.
Special guest speaker Madam Kudzu will discuss poisonous plants, cryptic creatures, and other ghoulish garden pitfalls.
Where: Forsyth County Extension Office, 5110 Piney Grove Road, Cumming
Cost: Free, but please bring a shelf-stable food item for our food drive for at-risk neighbors in Forsyth County.
Attire: Family friendly costumes encouraged, but optional.
Register: https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_54oE87I6whcCUfA

Fall Plant Sale, accepting orders now
Support Forsyth County Extension programs and beautify your yard, too! Fruit plants and native ornamentals available in time for fall planting. See order form at https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/forsyth.html

4-H Youth Programs

4-H offers a variety of enrichment programs for youth. Please contact Heather Haines at 770-887-2418 or heather.haines@uga.edu for more information and registration.

Cloverbuds, September 8, 5-6 p.m. (K-3rd) Our youngest 4-H'ers learn about fascinating things and practice motor skills through craft projects.

Community Club and County Council, September 8, 6:30-8 p.m. (4th-12th). The 4-H club for kids who are not in a school 4-H club. Student will do a community service project, learn about robotics, and vote on the County Council Board members.

Conservation Club, September 13, 6-7 p.m. (4th-12th). Students learn about environmental sciences, ecological principles, and stewardship.

Consumer Judging, starts September 28, 6-7 p.m. (4th-12th). Students learn how to evaluate and judge different products for consumer value. Weekly practices prepare them for the regional competition.

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