



What to Do About Grubs

By Jamie Dekes

Grubs. Everyone hates the grubs but most don't stop to wonder why the grubs are bothering them and not their neighbor. The grubs that seem to bother us the most here on Cape Cod are the Japanese beetle larvae. If you want to make sure you have your grub identified then you can look at its butt. Beetle butts are called rasters and you can tell what type of grub it is by the hair pattern on their raster. If the hair pattern looks like a v then you have yourself a Japanese beetle issue. These insects lay their eggs in June and choose to lay them in wet soils as opposed to dry. This is unfortunate for us considering most of our soils are compacted which retain water fairly well. Couple that with irrigation going off way too frequently and you have trouble brewing. To reduce likelihood of grub infestations we work firstly on reducing frequency of irrigation by watering for longer periods with less frequency.

Getting the life to come back to your soil will also greatly improve the chances of dealing with this pest swiftly. The worms will bring the air which will allow you to work your roots deeper into the soil. This is distinctly beneficial in the case of grub damage due to them eating mostly in the top 3 inches of the soil. The wet soils they prefer tend to have roots concentrating at the surface which is what they like to feed on.

We have a couple of very solid options for control of grubs as well. Nematodes are a microscopic worm that very much enjoys going after grubs. I'll spare you the details but they deal with grubs very effectively. Milky spore disease is another option for control. *Bacillus papillae* is put down in a grid pattern on the lawn and when a grub eats it, it kills them and ends up spreading more spores. It is slower to use as a control than nematodes but the application method is a little easier.

You have many chemical options as well but considering all the herbicides, bug killers and fungicides destroy the beneficials that are integral to our success they are not an ideal option. Mowing the grass at 4 inches will also help tremendously as grass makes food and breathes through its blade, thus allowing it to grow taller will give you a deeper root structure as more energy will be going to root growth, not pushing top growth.

Jamie (Dekes) Dedekian has worked at Hyannis Country Garden for 10+ years. He received an accreditation from the Northeastern Organic Farming Association (NOFA) as an Organic Land Care Professional (AOLCP). Jamie is Hyannis Country Garden's point person for organic lawn care. Bring your pictures and questions to Jamie at HCG...he's happy to help you with success with lawns.

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