

Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners

August Garden To Do List

By Halton MG Claudette Sims



- ❑ **Perennials** - Cut back any tired looking perennials & remove yellowed or dying stems & leaves or flowers, e.g. lavender, penstemon. Remove seed heads to control spread of aggressive self-sowing perennials or to save for winter sowing. Seed heads can also be left to feed birds in the late summer & fall.
- ❑ **Annuals** - Pinch back old flower heads to keep plants producing flowers.
- ❑ **Weeds** - Every weed pulled now is a thousand weeds you won't have to deal with later! Removing flowers before they go to seed will greatly reduce the seed bank in the soil for next year. Don't add flowers or seeds to compost.
- ❑ **Lawn** - Check your local municipality for [watering restrictions](#) (Halton). Yellow (dormant) lawns should bounce back in the fall when there is more rain. More info about dormant grass [here](#). Later in the month, over-seed with drought resistant grass, e.g. perennial rye grass or red fescue, then top dress.
- ❑ **Veggies** - Water during dry or hot weather to reduce plant stress. Remove diseased & damaged leaves/fruit. Do not over fertilize tomatoes as it can contribute to [blossom end rot](#). As you pull out 'old' plantings such as bolted lettuce, add new plantings like chard, radishes, carrots, kale, spinach, turnips, beets, basil. [Identify pests](#) troubling your veggie garden to take effective action. Harvest vegetables and berries regularly so that the plants keep producing.
- ❑ **Asparagus & rhubarb** - Keep well weeded and mulch heavily. Let asparagus fronds grow to feed the underlying crowns. Continue picking rhubarb. Prune off rhubarb **flower** stalks to send energy back to the plant.
- ❑ **Strawberries** - August is a good time to [renovate your beds](#).
- ❑ **Seeds** - Start saving seeds for next year, e.g. dill, fennel, lettuce, your earliest ripe tomato.
- ❑ **Powdery mildew** - Remove the worst affected leaves/stems. A simple [spray of water on leaves](#) during the day may reduce disease. Research indicates that a [milk & water spray can also be effective](#).
- ❑ **Water** - Avoid watering in the hottest part of the day; water any spring planted trees & plants regularly, & existing trees less frequently, but deeply to the root zone. Water the base of plants, not the foliage, or use soaker hoses.
- ❑ **Compost pile** - Water compost to accelerate decomposition. Use water from food prep (cooled), e.g. pasta "water", tea/coffee.
- ❑ **LDD Moth** (formerly "Gypsy" moth) - Now through to April, look for buff/brown egg masses and [scrape](#) off trees and structures into a bucket of soapy water. Leave for 48 hours to kill the eggs.
- ❑ **Amaryllis** - stop watering mid August to allow them to go dormant.



Our native Wild Petunia (Ruellia humilis) is the larval host for the splendid Common Buckeye butterfly.
Photo: C. Sims

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Our Favourite Plants: *Lobelia siphilitica* Great Blue Lobelia or Blue Cardinal Flower

By Halton Master Gardener Allyn Walsh

In this one of an occasional series on the favourite plants of Halton Master Gardeners, Allyn Walsh discusses *Lobelia siphilitica*

This striking plant, native to a wide area of eastern North America, deserves to be more commonly planted. Growing 2-3 feet in height, this moisture loving perennial tolerates sun but thrives best in part-shade. While it is commonly recommended for rain gardens, I have found that with hand watering in its first year, it subsequently does quite well in medium to dry moisture soils.



Native range of *Lobelia siphilitica*
Image from USDA 2014

While it is a short-lived perennial, it self seeds freely. Very freely! I have many volunteers appearing in clumps nearby the mother plants. They are easily pulled out and it is not at all hard to find homes for these seedlings.

Did you know?

The unfortunate species name “siphilitica” is based on the fact that it was once a folk remedy for syphilis before there were effective science-based treatments.



Read more:

Wildflower.org

Missouri Botanical Garden

Ontario Wildflowers

In our region, the blue flowers appear in early August and are striking through until the end of September. The flowers are tubular with 2-lipped form - three lobes on the lower lip and two on the upper lip. The leaves are finely toothed and lanceolate.



Photo from Allyn's garden September 2020



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Diagnosing Lawn Issues - Let's Start with Insects!

by Halton MGs Cathy Kavassalis & Claudette Sims

Can someone tell me how to fix this lawn? Over a short period, the grass has died in spots. Nancy Z

There are several possibilities including environmental issues, pests and diseases. In this article, we'll concentrate on pests.

Treatment options for pests can be cultural, mechanical or chemical and will depend on what insect is causing the damage as well as the actual number of insects found in the lawn.



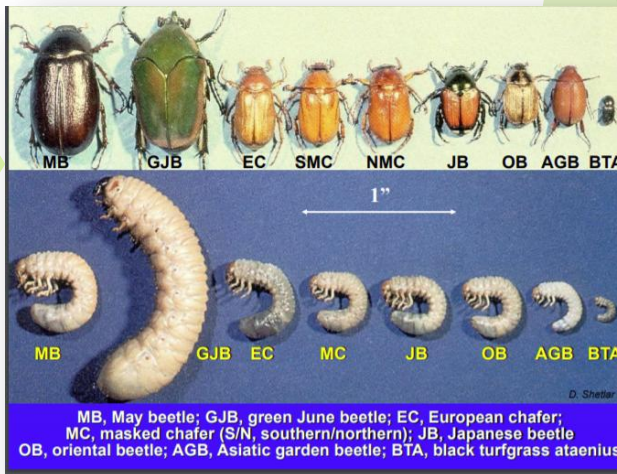
Start by going out to the lawn and lifting a square of sod about 30 cm (1ft) square and 10 cm (4 inches) deep). Place it on a sheet of newspaper and look for insects and in particular white grubs - the larvae of a number of beetles.

Try and identify the type and numbers of larvae that you see on the newspaper. Here are some of the beetle larvae that feed on lawn grass roots. The 1st three are the most common in Ontario

- June beetles (*Phyllophaga anxia*)
- Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*)
- European chafer (*Rhizotrogus majalis*)
- Northern masked chafer (*Cyclocephala borealis*)
- Black turfgrass ataenius (*Ataenius spretulus*)
- Green June beetle (*Cotinis nitida*)

This slide shows a number of different beetle larvae that feed on lawn grass roots. Control is based on numbers & the timing of the insect's life cycle. Identification of larvae may include close examination of insect anatomy.

Image: Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station



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How to Diagnose Lawn Issues - Let's Start with Grubs

Next, check for cutworm and army worm caterpillars. Pour soapy water on a damaged area of the lawn, wait 10 minutes & watch for cutworms to emerge.



Left: Cutworm eggs laid on grass can be removed by mowing

Right: Black cutworm larvae are green-gray to almost black, with a lighter gray underside and a broad stripe of lighter gray or brown down the middle of the back. Larvae are 1.5 to 2 inches long.

Images & Text [Purdue Extension](#)

Finally, look for “[Leatherjackets](#)”, the larvae of the European Crane Fly. At night, they feed at or below the surface in the thatch. Skunks & starlings can further damage lawns digging for the larvae. Peak damage usually occurs in May when skunks are feeding their young. The adult crane fly is fairly common and looks like a giant mosquito!

Dig out a section of grass about 4 inches across and tear it up looking for “leatherjackets” in grass or soil.

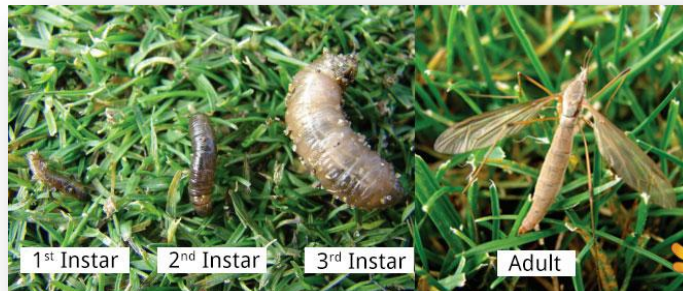


Image: [Nutrilawn.com](#)

Hopefully this process has helped you to identify the type and numbers of insects in your lawn. Now you need to decide if further action is warranted.

If grubs exceed damage thresholds, then some cultural or chemical action may be needed (see slide to the right), e.g. more than 3-4 May beetles per square foot may require action. But *Black turfgrass ataenius* numbers in spring need to exceed 30-80 for action.

White grub damage thresholds*

Species	grubs/ft ²
- May beetles	3-4
- European chafer	3-8
- oriental beetle, Japanese beetle, green June beetle, masked chafers	6-20
- Asiatic garden beetle	12-20
- Black turfgrass ataenius, spring	30-80
“ “ “ , summer	15-40

*values vary greatly with turfgrass type and condition. Healthy, vigorous turfgrass can tolerate higher densities.



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If you've determined that there are not an appreciable number of larvae, then it's time to check for chinch bugs. Cut the bottom out of a coffee can or large juice can and force it 5 cm (two inches) into the turf surface. Fill the can with soapy water, adding more water if the level recedes. Wait five to 10 minutes. If you have chinch bugs, they will float to the top of the can. These are quite small- about 4 mm in length.



Above: Using a juice can to find chinch bugs.
Right: Chinch bug adults & nymph with white band across the abdomen (far right)
Images OMAFRA

Control Options

Chinch bugs

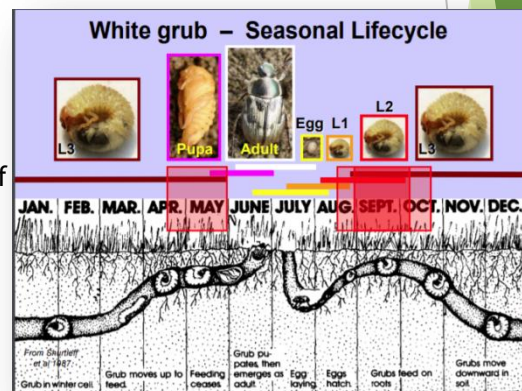
• Check for chinch bug infestations in the second week of July or when the bird's foot trefoil is in full bloom. If cultural controls (aeration, dethatching) are not effective, use insecticidal soap in affected areas.

White grubs, e.g. June Beetles, Japanese Beetles, European Chafer

- Hand pick or vacuum adults to reduce numbers
- Beneficial nematodes can be used to fight large numbers. Application is best when the grubs are small & near the surface of the soil (May or early June -see image on right).

Cutworms & Army Worms

- "Reduce [thatch](#) and eliminate soggy areas. Larvae have some natural enemies, such as [braconid wasps](#) and [tachinid flies](#). If more than 5 larvae per square yard are present, you may need to treat. [Beneficial nematodes](#) or an application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) may be effective against young caterpillars." [UC IPM](#)



White Grub Control

Applications of beneficial nematodes need to occur when the larvae are small and near the surface of the soil. Keep in mind that nematodes will also kill non-target larvae such as fireflies which spend part of their life cycle in soil.

Image: [Purdue Extension](#)

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How to Diagnose Lawn Issues - Let's Start with Grubs

Cultural Control - Your Best Option!

Your very best option when controlling insects is to promote a healthy lawn. Healthy, vigorously growing lawns can tolerate more grub feeding than stressed lawns because damage to one root is made up for by others. Here are some suggestions from the Government of Canada on [White Grubs](#).

- *“Beetles prefer to lay eggs in closely cropped lawns, so raise your summer mowing height to 6 to 8 cm (2.5 to 3 inches). Leave lawn clippings after mowing, because their slow release of nitrogen encourages micro-organisms to break down the thatch. Use fertilizer with high potassium and enough nitrogen.*
- *If you notice grubs during the warm, dry periods of the growing season, water and fertilize your lawn to strengthen it and make up for the root feeding damage. Apply a top dressing of sand and manure and overseed with grass.*
- *Deep, infrequent watering encourages deep-rooted, drought-tolerant lawns. Water no more than once a week, and water until at least 2 cm (1 inch) of water collects in a container placed on your lawn or for about one hour.*
- ***Predators:** Beneficial insects like ants prey on the eggs of June bugs. Certain parasitic wasps and flies also help keep June bug or Japanese beetle populations in check. Some of these are specific to a single insect, but others will control several pests in an area. Bird houses attract natural predators (like starlings and blackbirds) that feed on white grubs.*
- ***Resistant varieties of plants:** Choose resistant varieties of plants. If reseeding or establishing a lawn, use grasses containing an endophytic fungus like fescues and ryegrasses. This type of fungus keeps grubs away. Companion plants like larkspur and geranium are toxic to grubs.”*

Lawns grow best in sunny well drained areas. Consider alternatives for areas where there is heavy shade or compacted soil, e.g. pavers or mulched walkways, replacing turf with shrubs or alternative groundcovers (see [Cross Pollination April 2021](#) page 6 for native groundcover suggestions.)

Read all about it!

(Note: Insecticides mentioned in U.S. links may not be available or allowed under the Ontario Pesticide Act)

- [Grubs in Lawns](#) - OMAFRA
- [Hairy Chinch Bugs in Lawns](#) OMAFRA
- [European Crane Fly](#) - OMAFRA
- [What can I do about Japanese Beetles?](#) - Halton MG Cathy Kavassalis
- [Chinch Bugs](#) - CBC News
- [Chinch Bugs](#) - Government of Canada
- [Insects](#) - Professional Lawn Care Association of Ontario
- [White Grubs](#) - Government of Canada
- [Managing Turfgrass Insects of the Northeast Part 2: Root-infesting insect pests](#)
- [TURFGRASS INSECTS MANAGING BLACK CUTWORMS IN TURFGRASS](#) Purdue University Extension
- [The UC Guide to Healthy Lawns](#) - University of California Integrated Pest Management



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QUESTION OF THE MONTH - Help Little Henry!

Some of the leaves on my Virginia sweetspire "Little Henry" plants have turned yellow while the veins remain green. This seems to be the case primarily with the leaves on the outer edges of the plant. If I look toward the centre (see photo with hand), the leaves are more uniformly green.

Can you tell me what the problem is and what I can do to fix it? Gisele



It would appear that your plants have an iron deficiency known as iron chlorosis.

Chlorosis is the yellowing of leaf tissue due to a lack of chlorophyll. There are several things that can cause chlorosis such as poor drainage, damaged roots, compacted roots, high alkalinity and nutrient deficiencies. Nutrient deficiencies can occur because there is an insufficient amount of the nutrient in the soil "or" because

the nutrients are unavailable due to a high pH level (7.0 +) "or" because nutrients are not being absorbed due to injured roots or poor root growth.

The lack of iron is one of the more common nutrient deficiencies associated with chlorosis. A lack of zinc and manganese can also cause chlorosis, however as the yellowing is occurring on the terminal, younger leaves of your plants this suggests that a deficiency in iron is more likely the problem.

So what can you do about iron chlorosis? It's important not to overwater in the spring; overwatering can make the condition worse. It's also important to adjust watering seasonally, more water in summer and less in spring. Another thing that can make iron deficiency worse is compacted soils or low organic matter. Adding compost such as a mulch or incorporating it into the bed can make a big difference. Another option is to either fertilize with iron or to attempt to lower the soil pH by amending your soil from alkaline to more acidic. If you're going to attempt to do either, it is very important to do a soil test first to determine how much you need to add as iron or as sulphur to acidify your soil.

Halton MG Hariette Henry

Want to know more?

- [What is Iron Chlorosis and What Causes it?](#) Utah State University
- [Focus on Plant Problems – Chlorosis](#) University of Illinois Extension



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“What’s Growing On”

Halton Master Gardener Meetings are **being held virtually** until further notice.

Fill in our [online contact form](#) if you’re interested in coming to a meeting, joining our group or requesting a speaker for your club or interested group.

We are still answering your garden questions, so send us an email! It’s what we do best! HaltonMasterGardeners@Gmail.com



Ask an Expert!

CBC Radio Online Chats are Back

Are you ready to have the best garden on the block? We’ve partnered with [CBC radio Hamilton](#) to answer your garden questions. Our award winning live chat team featuring [Halton Master Gardeners](#) Liza Drozdov, Patty King, Janet Mackey and Claudette Sims, and [Toronto Master Gardeners](#) Tina Cesaroni & Tena van Andel with Royal Botanical Garden experts Jon Peter & Alex Henderson are there for you.

Listen to the call-in show with [Ontario Today’s](#) Ed Lawrence while we’re answering your garden questions live, Mondays from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Watch our Halton Facebook page for instructions on how to join or go to [CBC radio Hamilton](#) and click on **LIVE**.

Why don’t you grab a cuppa & join us!
Every Monday in July from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.



Shaw Garden Tour

Master Gardeners of Niagara, and HMG Claudette Sims will be on hand in various gardens to answer your questions & greet you.

- September 11, 2021
 - 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - Niagara-on-the-Lake
 - COST \$25 / \$20 before July 15
- For tickets, visit shawguild.ca



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