

Wally's Weekly News 11th OCTOBER 2008
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KEEPING A GOOD LAWN

The following are a few tips for those that have lovely lawns or would like to have a feature lawn.

Dogs, especially bitches are bad news for creating bare patches on lawns due to their early morning pee. The urine is very acid and makes for the perfect weed/plant/grass killer. If you have a dog and this problem, there is not an easy answer but you can reduce the damage.

First answer would be diluting the urine and if you have a lawn sprinkler system all you need to do is turn it on after the dog has been outside, for a few minutes.

Acid is neutralized by lime, so if you give your lawn a good sprinkling of lime every so often, it should help.

Grass that is burnt with urine and does not grow back, or goes brown in drier weather (dry spot), means the grasses roots are shallow and likely growing into the thatch layer on the soil. Remove the thatch and the grasses will root deeper. Instead of having to scarify the lawn can just spray it with **Thatch Busta**.

The product will eat up an inch of thatch in a month given average conditions. The area needs to be kept moist but not wet to get the best results.

If you are using a lawn weed killer add **Thatch Busta** to this and the weeds will disappear faster as well as cleaning up the thatch.

For brown, urine patches of grass, drench them with **MBL (Magic Botanic Liquid)** it will help remove contamination and assist the grass to regrow. (That is if the grass is not completely dead)

If the grass is dead the **Thatch Busta** will clean up the dead grass and fresh lawn seed can be sown. Water this in with **MBL** for a better strike.

Always use a top quality seed such as Super Strike for quick germination and fine grasses.

For dry spot in lawns; this is when the surface tension of the soil builds up and does not allow water penetration, simply squirt some dish washing liquid into warm water, lather and water onto dry area.

Lawn weeds are a big problem but if you over-sow a lawn in the spring and again in the autumn and keeping doing so till you have a thick carpet of grasses, your weed problems will disappear.

Never mow more than the top third off your grasses in one mow. Don't mow shorter than 30 to 50 mm. Try and keep the lawn soil moist all year round. On lawns growing on heavy clay soils, spread Gypsum and water in every few months for a year or so then once a year.

A number of gardeners have commented that their lawns have improved significantly through spraying them with **Perkfection** and **MBL** once a month. Feeding the lawn? Use only a slow release type where the natural ones are **Break Through** or **Bio Boost**. Apply when soil is moist and then roll the lawn.

Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)

CODLIN MOTH

Codlin moths are a seasonal pest which will emerge over the next few weeks and start off another cycle of damage. When the adult pests actually emerge, will depend on the weather and the amount of warmth, October, November and December are the normal months of activity.

The codlin moth emerges after apples, pears and walnuts fruit have set on the trees. Coming out from their cocoons they are active at dusk, when temperatures are over 15 degrees.

The adult moths mate and each female can lay up to 300 eggs on the foliage of the host trees.

The eggs hatch after 10-14 days and head for the nearest young fruit, where they eat a hole and tunnel into the centre, doing the damage they are well know for. Knowing the above gives one a good indication of when best to use a control.

The first method is to obtain a codlin moth pheromone trap that lures the male moths to its sticky pad. (Many garden centres stock the traps.) The traps themselves are likely to reduce the instance of damage if set up about now. In a perfect world, if you were to catch all the male moths before they had a chance to mate, then the females would lay only infertile eggs. But as we can see, only one female needs to mate, to ruin up to 300 fruit! So the trap is not a perfect control but it is a fantastic monitor.

By checking the trap every couple of days one can determine when the moths are active and then start spraying about 7 days later.

An excellent alternative to a pheromone trap is to hang a small tin of treacle in the tree with the assistance of an onion bag. The treacle acts also as a pheromone trap which you can monitor.

What spray to use? In the past Carbaryl was widely recommended. It had the disadvantages of thinning the apples in early sprays, before the fruit developed enough, and it was a poison which did end up in your previously healthy apples.

Neem Tree Oil, having 1500 ppm of the active ingredient, prevents the hatched grubs from eating and growing, is a logical answer.

The whole tree need not be sprayed only the small fruit ensuring good coverage.

Note there are three **Neem Oil** products available in NZ, only one of which is registered for use on food crops. The cost of registration is very high and likewise the registered product is over triple the price of the non-registered ones. In Australia, **Neem Oil** is certified organic so it is then up to the user as to whether it is used or not.

Spraying starts 7 days after an influx of males is noted in the trap. (Without a trap start once the temperatures are about 15 degrees) Spray late in the day after the sun is off the trees and repeat every 7-10 days. Add **Raingard** to the spray to prevent washing off in rain and to give additional UV protection. (**MBL** can be added too)

If totally successful one should only find a pin prick scar on fruit, at maturity (where the grub took its first and only bite)

A few gardeners have reported successes of less damage by sprinkling Epsom salts under the apple trees and lightly watering.

Others have sprinkled **Neem Tree Granules** which also appear to have reduced damage.

Many of the codlin moths have pupated in the soil under the tree and if when they emerge they cannot locate the tree above because they cannot smell the tree, then they become

confused and may leave the tree alone.

Marigolds or highly smelling plants can be planted under the tree to cause this to happen. Another old method is to let your chickens out to forage under the trees when the soil is moist in the winter time.

They will scratch out all the cocoons and eat the pupating grubs.

By stringing wire netting around the area where your trees are should confine the chickens and keep them from ruining other gardens and lawns.

If you have an apple, pear or walnut tree that has not had the problem in the past, then don't worry about any controls. If the problem develops in time to come, then you can do the above.

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