

Fall Brings a Variety of Gardening Questions

Larry Williams*

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Q. I replaced sod in my St. Augustine lawn because of a dead spot. When I dug out the dead sod, I noticed small white grubs 1/2 to 1 inch long in the spot. Are these nymph mole crickets or grubs? Also, will store bought remedies applied now do any good against these critters or should I wait until spring?

A. What you've described in your lawn sounds like grubs, which are the immature stage of various beetles. Now is not the time to control grubs. Use a late spring (May through June) application of Imidacloprid. Imidacloprid is found in Merit and is sold by the company Bayer. You'll find their products in blue packages at various garden centers. Below is a Web Page on turfgrass insects including grubs. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG001>



Q. The first of October I put down 3,000 sq. ft. of centipede grass sod. In past years I have put out winter ryegrass seed to keep my yard "green". Will it harm my centipede sod if I over seed my new lawn with ryegrass seed?

A. It definitely does not benefit the centipede grass. The ryegrass can compete with the permanent grass. I've seen a number of centipede lawns that were weakened during spring green up, attempting to out compete the ryegrass. The extra fertilizer can also cause problems for centipede grass, possibly inducing centipede grass decline. There are pros and cons for over seeding. The main reason that most people over seed is because they want a green lawn during the winter. Personally, I'm ready to put the mower away for the winter and I take a break and my lawn takes a break. But this is personal preference. You'll have to make that decision. There is definitely the possibility of causing some damage in your centipede grass as a result of over seeding.

Q. My folks have three different, quite vigorous and productive fig trees on their property...the names long forgotten. I'd like to propagate them but don't know how and when to do so...

A. Take fig cuttings from varieties that grow well in our area. The cuttings should be 8 to 10 inches long from one-year-old wood. The upper end should be just above a bud and the lower end just below a node. Stick the cuttings in the soil so only one bud is exposed. Tips and soft growth do not root well. Propagation is best done in late winter (Feb. - early March). Below is a Web Page on figs. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG214>

Q. Our termite contract is expiring and they are offering a far more expensive replacement that includes baiting traps. It includes native subterranean and Formosan termites. Are these insects we need to protect our home from and might we find other companies in the area that offer alternative termite control plans for different prices?

A. Termites are extremely common in Florida. They're found in any wooded environment in the state. It's very common to find them outdoors in almost any neighborhood, too.

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You'll have to make the decision to hire or not to hire a pest control company to monitor and/or to treat for termites. There is a gamble involved. Some people are willing to take the gamble and others are not. I know of significant termite infestations in brand new homes and I know of older homes with no termite problems.

When choosing a pest control company, it's always a good idea to get estimates from several different companies. Make sure to read the fine print on what is covered both in insects that are covered as well as what is covered if damage to the home is found from termites. Below is a Web Page on the topic of how to hire a pest control business. Also, there are several other Web Pages on termites in Florida as well as information on baiting systems:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG363>,

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG064>,

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IG097>,

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG237>

For more information on gardening in our area, visit the University of Florida IFAS website for Leon County at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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