

Mole Cricket in my landscape!

Spring is in the air! Spring is a season that most people look forward to; a time to plant their favorite plants, have a beautiful lawn and be involved with recreational activities. Unfortunately we are not alone; spring is also the favorite time for most insects including the mole cricket.

The adult mole cricket is about 1½ inch long, and light yellow to dark brownish in color. Over the past years the mole cricket has become the number one insect pest to home lawns, golf courses, sod farms, and athletic sports fields. Mole crickets make tunnels in the soil along with large holes called chambers which are used for mating. In Florida, there are three species of mole cricket of which two species are pests; southern mole cricket and tawny mole cricket.

For control purposes we will discuss the tawny mole cricket which is most destructive of the three species. Mole crickets flight happens between March to May, eggs hatch between April and June and become adults as early as September. There can be a second flight in the fall but not as major as the flight in the spring. Tawny mole crickets are very destructive to grass by eating its shoots and roots.

How can you tell if you have mole crickets? Mix two tablespoons of liquid dishwashing detergent with two gallons of water. Apply solution in two (2) feet by two (2) feet area; if mole crickets are present they will come to the surface. If the soil is very dry more solution may be needed to flush the insects and if soil is already saturated before drenching soap water solution it will not work. After drenching the soil if more than two mole crickets surfaced, then there is a need for treatment.

Treatment is dependent on where mole crickets are found. For example, homeowners may have more tolerance to mole cricket than a golf course superintendent who always strives to have an excellent course. The following are just a few of the chemical ingredients that are found at your local garden centers in various brand names. Carbaryl sold as Sevin, fipronil sold as Over'n Out, pyrethroids sold as Advanced Lawn, Bug-B-Gone, and imidacloprid sold as Advanced Lawn Grub. Before applying pesticides always read the label. It is important to note that there is insect biological control available. This is the practice by which the natural enemies of an insect are introduced to the landscape control a particular insect pest.

This article is just a brief overview and you are encouraged to contact Grantly Ricketts at UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at gricketts@ufl.edu or by phone 321-697-3000 for more information or for questions on horticulture.