

## LAWN PROBLEMS IN THE VILLAGES

### I. PREVENTION

Best practices will prevent problems. Mow at the proper height for your grass type. Ensure your irrigation is working properly, especially in the rainy season. Fertilize appropriately. Dethatch and aerate as needed.

### II. DIAGNOSING

#### 1) Know your grass type.

- *St. Augustine 'Floritam'* (above Rt. 466, and parts south of Rt. 44)  
Best in full sun; not always drought-tolerant. Mow 3½-4".
- *St. Augustine 'ProVista'* (parts south of Rt. 44)  
Semi-shade tolerant, Roundup resistant, slower growing, darker green.
- *Zoysia 'Empire'* (Rt. 466 to Rt. 44)  
Drought and semi-shade tolerant; turns brown when dormant. Mow 2-2½".

#### 2) Note environmental conditions.

Is it the warm season or cool season (pests and diseases have preferences)? Is it in the rainy season (fungal diseases)? Do you have grass in shade?

#### 3) Notice type of browning – spots/patches.

Are there spots/patches or is it generalized throughout the lawn. If spots/patches, note roughly how large they are. Is the rim rust-looking? Do you have a dog (pee spots)?

#### 4) Notice type of browning – generalized.

Did you have yard construction done that would cause compaction or is your lawnmower exceptionally heavy? Did you fertilize recently and was it watered in? Is the color of your grass blue, and when you walk through it, do you leave footprints (signs of underwatering)? Do you have thatch (Zoysia)?

#### 5) Look at the leaf blades.

If problem area is a spot/patch, look at the outside rim of the spot (which is where pests feed, since center is already dead from being eaten.) Are there spots or dead sections on the blades?

#### 6) Look at the leaf roots.

Pull a few out and see if the blades are black at the roots. Dig 2" deep for shortened roots or pests.

### III. PESTS

#### Chinch Bugs

Timeframe: Mar-Sept.

Affected: St. Augustine.

Symptoms: Yellowish grass, then irregular brown spots. May start close to hot surfaces like roads.

Test: ¼" bugs hard to see. Spray edge of spot with liquid soap to see if they surface.

Control: Rotate pesticide types to effectively control.



#### Hunting Billbug

Timeframe: Fall – Winter.

Affected: Zoysia.

Symptoms: Irregularly shaped yellow patches.

Test: Grass easily pulls free (result of grubs feeding). Check for sawdust-like debris inside grass. Check for white larvae grubs with brown heads in top 2" of soil. Adult is a 1/3" weevil that eats the blades.

Control: Pesticide.



#### Mole cricket

Timeframe: May-Aug.

Affected: St. Augustine, Bahia.

Symptoms: Dead patches, make tunnels that look like tire treads.

Test: 1¼" pre-historic looking bugs like light, so take flashlight out at night to see if they fly.

Control: Pesticide.



### **Nematodes**

Timeframe: All year.

Affected: St. Augustine, Zoysia.

Symptoms: Scattered yellowing and thinning out; feed on roots, making grass more susceptible to stress and drought.

Test: Roots are short (less water and nutrient uptake) and stubby, and may have galls. Note: The worms themselves are too small to be seen without a microscope.

Get tested: <http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/nematology-assay-lab/>

Control: Reduce compaction. Use compost with beneficial microorganism to strengthen roots. Spray with Idemnify (fluopyram) product.



### **Tropical Sod Webworm**

Timeframe: May-Sept.

Affected: St. Augustine, Zoysia.

Symptoms: Leaf tips stripped of green; webbing on top of grass.

Test: Shuffle through your grass to see 1" white/grey moths flying. May need to use flashlight at night to see because they hide in thatch during the day. Check for green pellets (poo) on leaf blades.

Control: Pesticide.



### **Tuttle Mealybug**

Timeframe: Summer.

Affected: Zoysia.

Symptoms: Brown dead patches or general dieback.

Test: Look for white wax on blades. Unroll bottom of leaf blade and look for a tiny 1/10" pink mealybug. Insect dies over winter.

Control: Difficult to control, try systemic pesticide, rotate types. Remove thatch.



## **IV. DISEASES**

### **Dollar Spot**

Timeframe: Nov-May.

Affected: Mostly Bahia, Bermuda, but also St. Augustine, Zoysia.

Symptoms: Small spots less than 3".

Test: Check for lesions on leaf blades of dead spots with brown edges.

Control: Fungicide.



### **Large/Brown Patch**

Timeframe: Nov-May.

Affected: St. Augustine, Zoysia.

Symptoms: Distinct circular patches larger than 3" with copper halo.

Test: Leaf pulls easily free of sheath. Sheaths are brown.

Control: Fungicide. Lessen moisture and nitrogen fertilizer.



### **Leaf Spot**

Timeframe: May-Sept.

Affected: St. Augustine (Grey Leaf Spot), Zoysia (Leaf Spot).

Symptoms: Browning.

Test: Check for small oblong spots on leaf blades. Overwatering?

Control: Fungicide.



### **Take All Root Rot**

Timeframe: Summer.

Affected: St. Augustine, Zoysia.

Symptoms: Irregular patches 8-24" or more of yellow and dead grass.

Test: Check for roots that are black and rotted. Scalped mowing?

Control: Spray with fungicide. May need to totally replace affected area, but even then, may not come back, in which case, use a different ground cover.



### **Generalized Browning Issues**

Overwatering (purple blades) – Test via “tuna can” test (place cans around lawn, run irrigation, measure water). Adjust irrigation or heads, check for working sensor.

Underwatering (bluish grass which leaves footprints) – Test via “tuna can” test. Adjust irrigation or heads, check for working sensor.

Over-fertilizing – Reduce amount of Nitrogen in particular, water in immediately after application.

Compaction – Aerate.

Scalping – Use correct mowing height.

Thatch – Dethatch Zoysia ever 2-3 years.

Dormancy - Normal for Zoysia in winter and may also do in stress.



Overwatering