

Species: Various species of beetle larvae

Common name: Curl grubs, lawn grubs, witchetty grubs (mistaken identity)

Mistaken for witchetty grubs, curl grubs are the larvae of several different beetles including the African Black Beetle, the black headed pasture cockchafer, Christmas beetles and scarab beetles. The grubs feed off dead plant material and the living roots and stems of plants, with the exception of legumes, including lawns. In lawns the damage is pretty obvious with large dead patches appearing as the summer progresses.



They are white or pale cream in colour with a brown greyish end. They grow to around 2.5 cm long. Eggs hatch during warmer weather and older larvae move closer to soil surface to feed. Spring and summer are the best times to treat lawns and garden beds. Infestations are usually worse in hot dry weather, like the drought that we have recently experience. In pots they can completely eat out the

root system of a plant and the damage can occur at any time of the year. In garden beds plants just fail to thrive.

You can check to see if you have a curl grub infestation in your lawn or garden bed by watering the area thoroughly and applying a layer of hessian, tarpaulin, old carpet, hessian bag or and leaving it overnight. Weigh it down so that it doesn't blow away. If present the curl grub should appear beneath the layer when it is removed.

Another way is to mix a very soapy bucket of water and pour it over the affected area. Over the next 10 minutes or so the grubs should come to the surface.

Control

Organic Control: Using a watering can apply neem oil to lawns, garden beds and potted plants as a soil drench in mid Spring to mid-Summer. Ensure thorough coverage of treated area.

Where possible turn over soil to expose grubs and remove by hand and feed them to the birds. Garden lighting may attract adult beetles to the area, so minimise its use.

An alternate method in pots; remove the plant from the pot and dispose of the potting mix. Thoroughly wash the pot. Wash off all soil from the roots and

repot into fresh potting mix and apply seaweed dilution e.g Seasol and place in warm sheltered position until the plant recovers.

Chemical Control: There are a few Lawn Beetle and Grub killers on the market such as Searles Dead Grub Pro granules or Brunnings Lawn Grub and Beetle Kill for example. Just follow the instructions. A repeat treatment may be required. Apply a high quality lawn fertilizer and ensure adequate water to encourage the lawn to regrow. In pots drench the pots with the grub killer then apply fertiliser.

It is best to keep soil well irrigated and that lawns are at least 5cm in height.